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Woman Of
The Year



MARVEL

1989 The Year In Review

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—The Super Powers Registration
Act Hearings

—America Under Siege:
This Summer's Atlantean Attack
Recalled

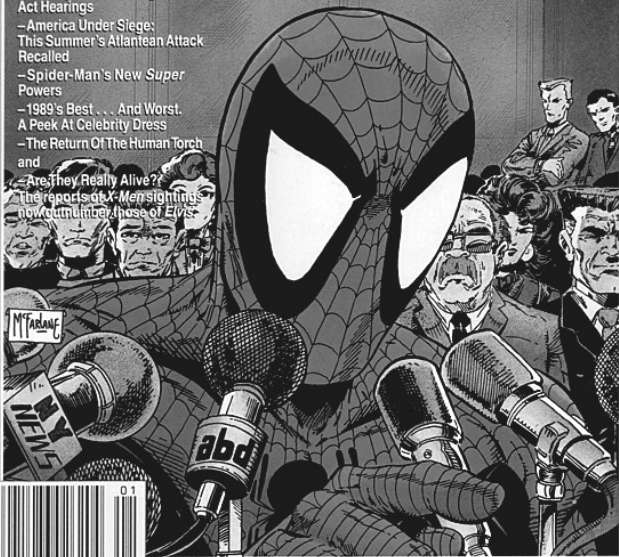
—Spider-Man's New *Super*
Powers

—1989's Best . . . And Worst.
A Peek At Celebrity Dress

—The Return Of The Human Torch
and

—Are They Really Alive??

The reports of *X-Men* sightings
now outnumber those of Elvis



The City of New York tried to fix the
George Washington Bridge for 7 months.

Then they
called us.

We fixed it in one day. Before lunch. Because Juggernaut didn't waste time trashing it. And time is money. Nothing matters more to us. Mere municipalities can't match our staff, our expertise, or our overhead.

Construction. Reconstruction. Deconstruction. Over the years, few bridges in New York haven't been demolished by Super Hero activity. And repaired by us. We do it all. And for 125,000 daily commuters, that makes all the difference.



Damage Control.

We can fix it.

From The Editor

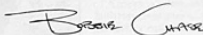
Mutant hysteria.

Some say that the Super Hero Registration Act comes out of the same hysteria that led Nazis to incarcerate and exterminate Jews in the earlier part of the century. Or that it resembles the Communist witch hunts of the 1950's, led by Senator Joseph McCarthy. The blacklisting, the trials, and the "communists under every bed" philosophy have certainly proved to be alive and well and living in this country today.

The growing fear of super heroes in the United States certainly seems viable and legitimate if one examines the connected events of the past several years. New York City was practically demolished as a result of "Inferno," the mutant wars of over a year ago. The property damage, loss of lives, and panic that spread throughout the city were staggering. Can we therefore judge it as paranoia when a New Yorker says he's afraid to ride the subways for fear of mutant reprisals?

This past year alone the citizens of the United States were called upon to witness horrors that, if they were not caused by super heroes, were at least contributed to by them. As Atlanteans climbed up on American shores, mutants were brought into the limelight. Of course, they fought on our side against the alien menace, but the American people are often quick to forget their good deeds. And then the most recent devastation, due to the "Acts of Vengeance" brought on by so-called super-villains battling super heroes. Yes, lives were lost, which is always a tragedy, but fewer human than super-human, and our heroes saved us each time from what could have been terrible consequences. But of course many Americans only see that none of these events would have occurred if super heroes *did not exist*.

Why not, therefore, endorse the Super Heroes Registration Act? It was George Santayana who taught us that "those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it." Communist hysteria forced so-called good American citizens to blacklist other good American citizens. Nazi propaganda led to so much more than just the revoking of the rights of Jewish European citizens. Are we willing to take that chance yet again? Super hero registration is more than just a draft registration or a tax form. It's a revoking of the civil rights of the people who sign it. Yes, people. It's a rescinding of the freedom that all Americans as citizens are entitled to. It's a branding, like one might have seen at Dachau. And it's a symbol, for all Americans to see, telling us that these people are different. They are to be feared, avoided, shunned. This is just the first step toward revoking their constitutional rights as American citizens. But let us never forget that these super heroes are citizens, taxpayers, upholders of the law, our good neighbors, friends, and yes, even our family. So it's time for us to put aside our personal fears and remember the things that we as a nation stand for.



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1989 The Year in Review

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1989 YEAR IN REVIEW



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The Coliseum Hotel, post holocaust

YEAH, BUT WITHOUT OL' GRAYSKIN AROUND?

The Action Isn't The Same

Perhaps the only surprise in the grand and gaudy reopening of the COLISEUM HOTEL and CASINO was that owner Michael Berengetti did not have an effigy of Mr. Fixit—a.k.a. the Hulk—or of any of his super powered antagonists to burn. The building has been completely reconstructed and refurbished. In fact it appears no expense has been spared to wipe out

every trace of its recent past.

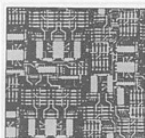
Mr. Berengetti believes that people will come to the new Coliseum to see and enjoy the glittering casino, the four-star restaurant, the headline talent at the lush Forum Lounge, and (perhaps especially) the trademark toga-clad Vestal Virgin cocktail waitresses. In this he is no doubt correct. Yet as anyone who has walked down the Las Vegas strip knows, beautiful women are as common as gambling losers. But one of the Hulk's torn suits, in a glass case by the casino... now that would be a draw!

Buying The Chance To Walk

In a move whose speed inspired the envy of corporate raiders nationwide, millionaire inventor Anthony Stark purchased all the outstanding stock, and thus gained control, of CORDCO, INC. The reason for his swift purchase of the biotechnology research company and one-time STARK ENTERPRISES subsidiary was, some believe, purely personal. Mr. Stark, crippled from a gunshot wound, wanted to walk and Cordco, Inc. possessed the technology that would enable him to do it. Dr. Walter Calley, one of Cordco's top researchers, had developed an organic computer chip that could replace damaged nerve tissue.

Even though Stark's sudden buyout of the company did not spark a protest or investigation from the Securities and Exchange Commission, it did anger Dr. Calley. Calley refused to perform the operation, citing his belief that the technology was too new and untested.

The microsurgeon, Dr.



Erica Sonheim, a long-time friend of Stark's, later performed the operation.

The operation was a success, and so far no negative side effects have appeared. As for Stark Enterprises, whose stock tumbled in the wake of the shooting and reports of Stark's plans to leave the company he founded, its stock is soaring. In fact, the company recently expanded in a new direction when Mr. Stark purchased, repaired, and reopened the SAGE HILLS MALL in California, which had been wrecked in a battle between the Hulk and Iron Man.

Stark still has to deal with lingering bruised feelings at Cordco, but for that, the best tonic may be just seeing Cordco's new owner as living proof of the company's success.

A Kinder, Gentler Daily Bugle?

It may not rank up there with a free ticket to paradise, but Spider-Man must be feeling pretty good, anyway. His most vocal, per-

sistent, and seemingly unbeatable enemy, J. Jonah Jameson, has finally been silenced. In a breathtakingly swift takeover that still has the Wall Street crowd talking, Thomas Fireheart of FIREHEART INDUSTRIES became the new owner of the DAILY BUGLE newspaper.

What surprised insiders most was the fact that the buyout included Jameson's own stock holdings in the Bugle.

It remains to be seen how many changes will be made by Mr. Fireheart. But one of the first, and certainly the most obvious, change was

the editorial policy shift concerning Spider-Man. As New Yorkers have come to know, Spider-Man was Jameson's bete noir. And Jameson made a reputation for himself as a man who would stop at nothing to run up the circulation of the Bugle at the expense of Spider-Man. Now all that has changed. Now the Daily Bugle is printing articles praising Spider-Man. Of course, this may just be a calm before an even greater storm for both Spider-Man and Mr. Fireheart. Rumors are already claiming that Jameson is going to put out a new paper to challenge the Bugle. In the meantime, be sure to be with us next year—we may just find ourselves reporting that a certain infernal region has frozen over.



Thomas Fireheart

One Man's Meat . . .

After a dramatic nighttime raid which could be described as Sinclair Lewis pulling a Rambo, FACTORY FARM, the high tech poultry and livestock genetic breeding, processing, and packing company, is no more. Long a target of animal rights organizations for its alleged inhumane treatment of pigs, chickens, and cattle, Factory Farm was finally done in in a night attack by the masked vigilante, *Daredevil* and his unusual ally, *Brandy Ash*. Ms. Ash is the estranged daughter of Skip Ash, owner of Factory Farm. Apparently Ms. Ash, disgusted by her father's work, planned to "blow the lid off" the secret methods her father used to create more profitable animals. *Daredevil*, who had been trailing Ms. Ash in order to determine if she was an accomplice in her

father's illegal drug-running operation, discovered her plans and allied himself with her. Together, the two attacked Factory Farm, blew up several structures, let animals loose, and succeeded in turning public attention on Ash's atrocious and illegal farming practices.

The shutdown of Factory Farm is just one of a series of sensational problems Skip Ash has had to battle in recent times. Among his operations exposed are the previously mentioned drug-running business, alleged illegal CIA covert war operations, and the kidnapping and genetic manipulation of young, beautiful women (which culminated in the creation of "the perfect female companion" for himself, Number Nine). If Skip Ash had been content to remain in the forefront of funding animal husbandry biotechnology, he might still be living high off the hog. ■



HEY, PUNISHER!

We're The Good Guys! (Aren't We?)

FAXTECH AEROSPACE and the UNDERWATER BOAT COMPANY are two defense contract companies lucky to be still operational. The main reasons for their present troubles are corruption and cost-overrun scandals. But the real reason for these companies' problems is the fact that in 1989 they finally encountered a foe against whom their traditional weapons of graft, featherbedding, and hefty PAC contributions were worthless. Even their in-house security services,

freelance agents, and the extraordinary employment of the U.S. Navy proved to be as ineffective against this foe as Samson's donkey jawbone would be against an M-1 Abrams tank. The foe they were trying to stop and/or kill was the *Punisher*, for he possessed information that almost ruined both corporations.

As it was, the undeclared war saw the destruction of Faxtech's flex-wing fighter prototype, the theft of Underwater Boat's Piranha submarine, the deaths of a congressman and dozens of other people, and the ruin of many reputations. Too bad DAMAGE CONTROL has its own troubles, because these two companies sure need help cleaning up their messes. ■



This Looks Like A Job For. . .

Pity DAMAGE CONTROL! The company can clean up and repair any wake of destruction left by a super hero/super-villain battle, but when it comes to keeping its own house in order, the roof collapses.

First, the venerable Mrs. Hoag, who had been running the operation, left to become a member of the Presidential Commission on Superhuman Activities.

Then the silent partners who controlled the company sold Damage Control to CARLTON INDUSTRIES. The new owners promptly initiated a series of drastic cost and staff cutting measures which predictably caused Damage Control's remaining labor force to strike—just at the moment when demand for Damage Control's services was at its highest! Attempts by management to continue operation, which included temporary hiring of the She-Hulk, only muddled matters



Damage Control at work

further. An additional complication was an attack on Damage Control by the *Punisher*, who believed the company was linked to organized crime.

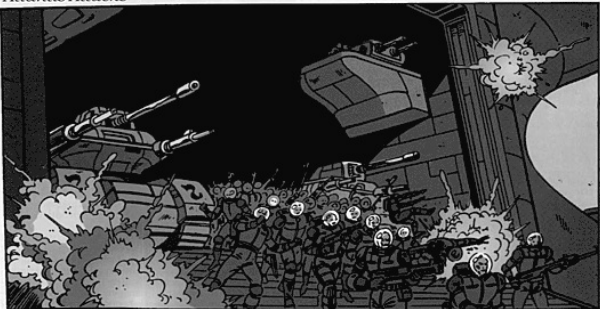
But there may still be hope for the company's future. White knights in the form of

Mrs. Hoag and Albert Cleary, Damage Control's former comptroller, are attempting to gain control of Damage Control. Trouble is, if they succeed, will there be any pieces left worth putting back together? ■

—Dwight Jon Zimmerman

AMERICA UNDER SIEGE:

Atlantis Attacks



Atlantean forces attack New York Harbor.

It was a nation whose existence most Americans had refused to believe that shook them out of their naive complacency. And this was far from Atlantis's first attack on the human race. It was not so many years ago that the armies of Atlantis, that legendary sunken nation inhabited by a race of water-breathing humanoids, first emerged and seized temporary control of Manhattan Island. At that time the Atlanteans were led by the equally legendary Prince Namor, the *Sub-Mariner*, that enigmatic figure who has proved both staunch ally and deadly enemy to America in years past. It was *Dr. Reed Richards*, leader of the celebrated team of adventurers called the FANTASTIC FOUR, who found the means of driving the Atlanteans back into the sea. There had been two other major Atlantean attacks on Manhattan Island in the intervening years.

But Namor was at long last reported dead, slain during a conflict in the Panama Canal involving another undersea nation, Lemuria, whose existence had long been rumored. Control of Atlantis had passed to the marauding warlord, *Attuma*, who has been held responsible for past attacks on the people of the surface world. Attuma formed an alliance with the Lemurians, and then launched a new attack on the United

States. Americans across the country gaped in horror at their television screens as they saw blue-skinned alien forces march triumphantly down the familiar locales of Wall Street, Greenwich Village, and even Times Square itself! "We should never have relaxed our vigilance after the first Atlantean invasion," thundered United States Senator *Robert Kelly*. "We simply were not prepared for them when they struck again."

The United States government began to receive indications of the oncoming invasion in the preceding weeks. During that time, however, America's attention was diverted by the incredibly rapid rise of the "Save Our Society" organization, which purported to be able to cure people of their addictions to alcohol or narcotics. S.O.S. mysteriously vanished from existence at the time of the invasion's outbreak, amid reports that various S.O.S. patients had been mutated into reptilian creatures similar to those reportedly seen only months before in Washington, D.C. (Leaks from the federal Commission on Superhuman Activities have hinted at a link between S.O.S. and the Atlantean invasion, but what that link may be remains unknown.)

The Atlantean invasion began in earnest with simultaneous attacks on

four strategic areas of the Eastern seaboard: the missile base at Cape Canaveral, Florida; Langley Air Force Base in Virginia; Fort Hamilton Army Base in New York; and the Shoreham Nuclear Plant, near New York City. The superhuman champions known as the AVENGERS split into four teams that successfully repelled each of the assaults. But now the nation knew that it was in for very serious trouble indeed. The president and his closest advisers were evacuated from Washington D.C. for safety's sake during the attack on nearby Langley. And many New Yorkers were seized with panic on hearing of the attack on Shoreham. (Subsequently, the movement to shut down the nuclear power plant permanently, for being too close to the metropolis for comfort, began anew.)

Dr. Richards and the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that the Atlantean forces were most likely to focus their next attack on Manhattan, the target of so many of their attacks on the United States in years past. As a result, the Pentagon ordered that the available nearby combat units of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard be massed to lower Manhattan's Battery Park to repel the expected assault.

Operating alongside these military

units were the five current members of the Fantastic Four: Dr. Richards, his wife Susan (the *Invisible Woman*), her brother Johnny (the second *Human Torch*), Benjamin Grimm (formerly the monstrous *Thing*, who has once again reverted to human form), and their new co-worker, the second *Ms. Marvel*, who has become a female counterpart to the superhumanly strong *Thing*. The local New York super hero, *Spider-Man*, also volunteered his services. The Pentagon is said to have been wary of working with this controversial figure, but Dr. Richards vouched for Spider-Man's trustworthiness.

Sure enough, the expected assault materialized, as Atlantean warships and armed skycraft abruptly appeared in New York Harbor. The waiting American military was prepared, and quickly repulsed the onslaught.

What the Pentagon had not expected was that the Atlanteans' "first wave" attack was little more than a feint. A sea monster of unknown species, several stories tall, rose from New York Harbor, apparently guided by the Atlantean riding in a structure on its back. (Dr. Richards subsequently referred to the creature as a "Megasaur," although he noted that this was an approximate translation of the Atlantean name, and that the beast was apparently not related to dinosaurs.) Now the assembled American troops suddenly found themselves on the defensive, battling desperately but in vain to halt this juggernaut's advance through the streets of lower Manhattan.

The Atlantean army followed in the Megasaur's wake and within the hour had taken virtual control of all of Manhattan beneath 34th Street. Attuma himself came ashore to direct his army's march of conquest.

It was at this point that people across the nation, even at the highest levels of government, came to believe that the Atlantean attack on Manhattan might actually succeed. "The Atlanteans couldn't possibly take over the whole country," said *General Argyle Fist*, "but they could very easily hold Manhattan and all its people hostage almost indefinitely. And then the government would be over the proverbial barrel. Attuma could make outrageous demands and threaten to wipe out hundreds, thousands, even millions of people until he got what he wanted. Shoot, I don't even want to think what would have happened if he hadn't been stopped!"

It was Spider-Man who unexpectedly managed to rid the city of the marauding Megasaur, which had made its way all the way into midtown Man-

hattan. As the world watched via live television coverage, the enigmatic masked avenger tricked the behemoth into lashing out at an electrical billboard, electrocuting itself and its driver. The Megasaur itself seemed almost unfazed, but its driver was knocked unconscious, and has since been taken into military custody. Spider-Man then took over the role of the monster's "guide," luring it into the East River. The Megasaur then swam off to parts unknown.

Still, by this time the Atlanteans had occupied half the island of Manhattan and seemed almost unstoppable. The American forces now retreated to 59th

Street, along the southern edge of Central Park, but they could barely withstand the forward momentum of the Atlantean advance. The Fantastic Four (minus Susan Richards) and Spider-Man arrived on the scene to join the embattled American troops in making a last-ditch stand against Attuma and his invaders.

It was then that the news came of the most horrifying event of the entire war. Sources in NASA informed the major television networks and bureaus of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* that satellites had detected a nuclear explosion at a location in the Atlantic Ocean believed to



The Atlantean sea creature "Megasaur" prepares to do battle on U.S. soil.

WAVE OF FEAR

The sight of the sea monster nearly shattered the troops' morale. "Sure, we know all about the Sub-Mariner," said one soldier afterward, "and I'd seen pictures of those blue-skinned people in stories about the first invasion. But when the monster showed up, it was suddenly like the ground had fallen away under my feet. We all felt this just couldn't be real, you know? But when we saw our buddies getting killed by this thing, we knew we had to fight back, or we'd be next. But from then on it was like we were having a nightmare and couldn't wake up."

be at or near the current site of Atlantis. The news hit the nation's airwaves almost immediately.

American government officials from the President on down have vehemently denied that the United States was responsible for the bombing of Atlantis. Nevertheless, according to every major polling organization, the vast majority of Americans are certain that the United States carried out the bombing on the orders of the President himself. "How can anybody believe we didn't do it?" scoffs famed opinion maker J. Jonah Jameson. "If we dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end World War II, then why wouldn't we drop one on Atlantis? They were attacking our greatest city, endangering the lives of eight million people! It was them or us, period."

Apparently the news of Atlantis's destruction reached the Atlantean army itself nearly as fast, totally shattering the invaders' morale. In the midst of battle, the Atlantean army suddenly halted in their tracks and fell eerily quiet, and then quickly retreated back into the sea. Attuma himself seemingly fell into a state of shock, and made no protest when the Fantastic Four and Spider-Man took him prisoner, turning him over to military custody. The American commanders decided not to pursue the retreating Atlanteans, perhaps less out of mercy than simply due to exhaustion of the United States troops.

Attuma and all other captured Atlanteans were quickly transported to an unknown prison. The press has not been allowed to contact any of these prisoners of war; even if access was permitted, the language barrier would prevent any communication with the Atlanteans. Attuma's motives for the invasion hence still remain a total mystery.

As yet the government has not announced what it plans to do with these prisoners. Talk persists of holding a full-fledged war crimes trial, comparable to those at Nuremberg after the second World War.

Although most of the nation believes that the war ended with the capture of Attuma, in fact the Avengers and Fantastic Four were involved in an extensive mopping up operation, most of the details of which remain unknown. It appears, however, that the Atlanteans' allies, the Lemurians, took several female "super heroines" hostage during various stages of the conflict.

For example, during a press conference held almost immediately afterwards, Reed Richards admitted that his wife, Susan, had been abducted by unknown parties during the warfare.

America had long believed itself to be safe. So many of the nations of Europe had been invaded repeatedly over their centuries long histories. Even Great Britain, protected by water on all sides, fell victim to brutal aerial attacks during the second World War. But America was separated by entire oceans from its past foes. The United States had not suffered a full scale invasion since the British burned Washington, D.C. in the War of 1812. And fears of nuclear attack from the skies had subsided in the American consciousness since the days of the cold war.

And then, this year, Americans were shocked as they turned on their television sets and saw the flag of Atlantis flying atop the Empire State Building.

He and other members of the Fantastic Four declared that their next order of business was to find her.

The Invisible Woman was not the only "super heroine" to be abducted under mysterious circumstances. Shortly before the invasion of Manhattan, Henry McCoy, the Beast, a member of both the Avengers and the mutant team X-Factor, was reported to be on the Atlantic coast of South America. According to witnesses, the Beast claimed to have battled Atlantean forces underwater and saved a red-headed woman whom he identified as his X-Factor teammate Marvel Girl from captivity. "But the beautiful lady had almost drowned. Senor Bestia tried to revive her, but he failed," said an elderly onlooker. "Then this head appeared in the air in front of us. It was this blue-skinned man, but it did not look like one of the Atlanteans I have seen on television. His forehead was very large, and had ridges on it. He said that only he could save the senorita, and then he made her disappear. Senor Bestia was very upset." This witness's description matches that given by New Yorkers who saw just such a blue-skinned being encounter the She-Hulk during her battle with the Abomination in New York a few weeks before and the Invisible Woman during the invasion itself.

Soon after the invasion came reports from a fishing vessel four hundred miles off the New England

coast of a sighting of another immense sea monster locked in mortal combat with Jennifer Walters, the She-Hulk, a member of the Avengers, and another woman with blue skin, apparently an Atlantean. Other Avengers arrived on the scene in response to the ship's distress call and defeated the monster. But then, to the astonishment of the men aboard the ship, the Avengers ended up battling the She-Hulk herself. "The She-Hulk kept saying she was in the power of someone called 'Gore,' and had to go to him," reported one of the onlookers. "It was as if she was hypnotized or something." The Avengers then released Walters and followed her as she swam off in pursuit. It has been theorized that this "Gore" was the same individual who abducted Marvel Girl and the Invisible Woman.

Two more Avengers, Thor and Quasar, along with the Thing, were sighted by many heading in a great rush to the home of the reputed sorcerer, Dr. Steven Strange. At this time Strange was still believed to be dead, but it is now thought by many that the three "super heroes" went there in search of his aid.

Finally, the Avengers and the Fantastic Four conducted a joint mission somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. Afterward, the two teams held a joint press conference to announce the rescue of the Invisible Woman, Marvel Girl, and She-Hulk, as well as the Scarlet Witch, who had also been taken captive, from



The mysterious sea creature that repelled the Atlanteans.

the undersea realm of Lemuria. Richards stated that the two teams had defeated the Lemurian forces and that they no longer posed a threat to American security.

Captain America and Richards both supported the government's contention that it was not responsible for the nuclear bombing of Atlantis. "I've spoken with a number of the captured Atlanteans," said Dr. Richards, "and they claim that their own Lemurian allies betrayed them and set off the explosion." Captain America added that he had recently spoken with an Atlantean acquaintance who was not one of the invaders. "She told me that the city of Atlantis had already been evacuated due to the attack of a sea monster sent by the Lemurians. So the city was empty when the bomb went off." Hence, the Atlantean race is far from extinct, although no one seems to know if the retreating Atlantean army has met up with the refugees from Atlantis itself.

Asked about "Gore" by a reporter from this magazine, Richards and Captain America declined specific comment, repeating that Lemuria was no longer a menace.

The President, the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have all agreed with Richards' assessment of the situation. Although many in Congress have demanded that the United States Navy hunt down and destroy the remaining Atlantean and Lemurian armed forces, the President has put an end to the state of national emergency. "The Atlantean and Lemurian armies have suffered crippling blows," he stated in a televised address. "They have learned that Americans have not grown weak or timid, that we can still fight tyranny as bravely as we did in World War II, or even the Revolution itself. This war is over and America is once again victorious."

Still, some doubts persist. "There must have been more to it than what we saw," states scientist Dr. Henry Croft. "The Atlanteans and Lemurians don't have enough numbers between them to conquer the United States. They must've had some ace in the hole, some secret that no one is telling us about. That 'Gore' person probably had something to do with it. But the Avengers and FF must've disposed of that weapon somehow, because otherwise they would have used it."

And what of Manhattan, the battlefield itself? In truth, though hospitals are indeed packed to capacity, there were far fewer civilian casualties than expected, and although it will take months to repair all the damage to buildings, the amount of property



The first sighting of the Atlantean forces.

damage was surprisingly low. "This was a terrifying experience for the people of this city. But I don't expect another massive exodus from the city like there was after the first Atlantean invasion," contends New York City District Attorney Blake Tower. "New York has been plagued with superhuman menaces for quite some time now, and if you become one of their victims, it's a horrifying experience. But I think most New Yorkers take

pride in the way our locally based super heroes' and the police forces managed to deal with them. They're the symbol of New York fighting back. And what makes a person a true New Yorker is his ability to endure adversity. Hey, if you can live through the occasional rampage through the city by the Hulk, then getting through rush hour on the subway is a breeze!"

—Peter Sanderson New York

AMERICAN OPINION MIXED

According to this magazine's own poll, fully eighty-three percent of the American populace applaud the bombing of Atlantis and forty-one percent of them insist that the administration should take public credit for the attack. Nonetheless, a highly vocal minority condemns the bombing as unjustifiable mass murder, even as genocide. "The city of Atlantis wasn't just a military base," contends oceanographer Dr. Walter Newell. "It was the Atlanteans' home. Their armies were in America fighting the war. Whoever dropped the bomb didn't kill the enemy, but innocent noncombatants, including women, children, and even infants!"

Freedom Force Operatives Killed

FREEDOM FORCE, the U.S. government-sponsored super-powered organization, suffered serious casualties late this year in a pitched battle off the coast of Scotland.

Though details of the conflict are sketchy, it is known that two members of Freedom Force—known only as *Destiny* and *Stonewall*—were killed in the melee, while a third operative, *Avalanche*, was seriously injured. The conflict, which took place on and around tiny Muir Island, apparently also involved the cyborg terrorist group, the REAVERS. There were no body counts on their side though it is reported that they suffered

more severe losses than Freedom Force did.

Though government sanctioned, Freedom Force has come under fire from the world press in the past for their questionable tactics, and for the fact that they formerly called themselves the BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS.

"What can we do but press on?", Dr. Valerie Cooper, Special Assistant to the President's National Security Adviser and supervisor of Freedom Force, said at a press conference shortly following the fracas. "Perhaps we will find replacement members for our fallen comrades . . . time will tell. I do know that Stonewall and Destiny died for their country."

The remaining members of Freedom Force are *Mystique*, *Blob*, *Pyro*, *Crimson Commando*, and the recovering *Avalanche*.



Freedom Force battling the Avengers several years ago.



The Avengers battle to save their park

Acts Of Marketing

At least one person benefited from this year's break-out at the Vault, the prison for super-powered criminals. The resulting chaos—dubbed "Acts of Vengeance" by the national news media—caused dozens of deaths and uncounted injuries to bystand-

ers during pitched battles between the criminals and their super-powered nemeses, as well as wreaking an estimated \$800 million in property damage around the country.

But for Edwin Durge of the Hollywood area, Acts of Vengeance was little more than a short but sweet marketing opportunity.

Durge, a 54 year-old street-corner salesman, was quick to realize that a mass escape from the Vault would quickly become an event of national prominence. He avidly followed the story as it broke, searching for what people in his profession call an "angle."

He found it when he first heard that the national emergency was being referred to as "Acts of Vengeance."

"I have a friend who owns a print shop, you know, silk-screen and buttons and stuff," he explained. "So I managed to get a little loan—and it wasn't from no bank, mind you—and started printing up these buttons and shirts."

Each button, shirt and bumper sticker Durge printed said, simply, "I survived Acts of Vengeance."

The items sold like wild-fire, and soon he was able to distribute them to almost all areas affected by the battles. "I was really cookin' there for a while," Durge said, shaking his head slightly. "Then, well . . . I guess irony can be pretty ironic sometimes."

As his sales were peaking,

Durge ordered a much larger number of the novelty items. They were delivered to his warehouse in Hollywood, which was promptly destroyed during a battle between the Avenger, *Hawkeye*, and a flying, unusually-armed criminal called *Boomerang*. The loss of the items cost Durge his entire profits, to within a startling 86.

But Durge doesn't seem disheartened. "S'all right," he says, sitting back on his familiar street corner. "This dog had his day. But I'm gonna keep my eye on that Vault . . ."

In that regard, Durge will most assuredly not be alone.



Carlton Control?

DAMAGE CONTROL, the engineering and construction company that has for years held a virtual monopoly on cleaning up after super-powered beings, found its collective hands full during "Acts of Vengeance" this year. But according to staff members, Damage Control's biggest struggle in 1989 was an internal battle—with its new owners, THE CARLTON CORPORATION.

"Hate" is such an ugly word," Marketing Vice President **Henry Ackerdson** said when reporters quoted several of his fellow Damage Control staffers. "A takeover is never a pretty scene, but I think that our staff was generally pleased with the smooth transition to being a Carlton satellite company."

"I hated it," Head Foreman **Lenny Ballinger** stated a day later. "Those Carlton leeches, thinking they knew how to run a company like this. Makes me wanna retch, you know?"

"Well, I don't want to be too unkind," Account Executive **Albert Cleary** said, "but that building they put us in . . . ugh! It was terrible, just terrible. The Flatiron Building is where Damage Control belongs."

Eugene Strausser, head of research and development for Damage Control, agreed. "Something about that building gave us all the creeps . . . that big 'DC' carved on the roof . . . I don't know, I just didn't like it."

Now back in their original offices, Damage Control seems more at home, and more at peace. The only chaos to enter their lives lately—besides, of course, the disasters to which they regularly attend—is the addition of a bouncing new intern nicknamed **Speedball**. "Gosh, I don't care where the building is, I'm just pleased as punch to be here!" the blue-clad youth exclaimed while photocopying a pile of business contracts. "Jeepers, what more can I say?" ■



Damage Control's new headquarters



Magneto testifying before the World Court

Super Powers Act Shelved

The fate of superhuman beings in the United States was considered by Congress this year, but no definitive resolution was reached.

After two weeks of debate before the House, which saw so-called "super heroes" such as **Dr. Reed Richards** of the FANTASTIC FOUR and others testifying before the public officials, the controversial Super Powers Registration Act was shelved for later consideration. The bill, which would require any Americans with paranormal abilities to register themselves and said abilities with the United States government, sparked a worldwide debate on the issue.

Several years ago, the World Court found the mutant known as **Magneto** not guilty of crimes against humanity. That ruling was greeted with anger and violence by many "normal people" across the world who feel that superhumans, especially mutants born with their abilities, are a menace to the human race.

In many cases, the military forces of the world have proven ineffective against the awesome might of super-powered beings. In a world increasingly populated with the superbeings—a fact which modern science has yet to fully explain—the issue is not likely to lie at rest for long. Many experts fear an ultimate reckoning between man and super-man. ■

Furious Rumors

Although the SHIELD organization was disbanded last year, there are now indications that a new incarnation of the covert organization may be forming. An anonymous Washington insider has revealed that certain events this year—which the source said were strictly classified—had convinced former SHIELD agent **Col. Nicholas Fury** of SHIELD's importance to world security and peace.

Fury, when contacted by telephone, snapped, "That info is totally confidential. And whoever leaked it to you is a paper-pushin', self-servin' goldbricker. And ya can quote me on that one!"

Government officials would neither confirm nor deny the reformation of SHIELD, or related rumors pertaining to the attempted theft of a B-2 Stealth Bomber and kidnapping of a U.S. Army general. ■



Nick Fury and associates

—Evan Skolnick

Nervous Energy

The shooting of entrepreneur Anthony Stark may have opened the door to startling new technology which could radically alter the permanency of human nerve damage.

When Stark, owner and CEO of California-based STARK ENTERPRISES, was shot at close range early this year, the wound severed his spine and rendered him paraplegic.

As with most kinds of nerve damage, Stark's condition was considered to be permanent. Unlike other tissues in the human body, such as muscle and bone, nerves are largely incapable of regrowth after trauma. Once broken, their delicate tetherings of dendrites, axons and synapses can rarely be reconnected.

But a new nerve regrowth

system developed by Dr. Walter Calley of CORDCO Research Company, Inc. in New York may change all that. Calley's eight years of experimentation with "organic microchips," also called "biochips," have produced technology which apparently makes nerve regrowth possible. Stark, after having one of the biochips implanted in his damaged spine, is walking again.

"It's a miracle," Stark said. "Application to the general public is years away. But when that day arrives, it will be one of the happiest of my life."

The results are dramatic, but how does it work? Dr. Erica Sondheim, who performed the landmark operation on Stark, explains. "The problem with nerve regeneration is not that the body is incapable of it. In

fact, studies have shown that, under the right circumstances, the human body is quite capable of repairing parts of its nervous system. The real difficulty is getting the brain to send the healing message to its damaged neurons. For some reason, the automatic repair systems that mend a broken bone or a torn muscle don't generally get activated when nerves are severed.

"That's where the biochip comes in. It sends that healing message to the affected area, causing the nerves to regenerate. That's a gross generalization, of course, but it's essentially accurate."

Stark has been the only human recipient of the biochip, and that status is clouded in controversy.

Dr. Walter Calley feels that Stark should not have been operated on until further

testing could be done. In fact, when Stark first heard of the experimental process and asked him to perform the operation, Calley flatly refused. Even after Stark bought Cordco—which had originally been a subsidiary of Stark Enterprises—and ordered Calley to comply, the neurosurgeon again refused.

It was then that Sondheim volunteered to perform the operation. And even now, after its apparent success, Calley still questions Stark and Sondheim's decision to use his process.

"Any scientist worth his—or her—salt knows that there are procedures you follow, there are precautions you take when you're operating on people," Calley asserted. "Laboratory rats are one thing. Human beings are another."

Time-Travel Talk

The question of whether time-travel is possible became even more complex several months ago, when a New York City police officer claimed to have been transported millions of years backward in time.

Officer Vincent Evans, an 8-year veteran of the force, was one of the police at the 16th Precinct headquarters who attempted to defend it against a large, red robot apparently controlled by Latverian leader Victor Von Doom. According to witnesses, Evans was bathed in a green light emanating from the robot's chestplate. He then disappeared, only to reappear a few moments later, dazed.

"He was mumbling something about the heat and dinosaurs," said Lieutenant John Stone, Evans's immediate superior and a witness. "I just grabbed him and got to cover."

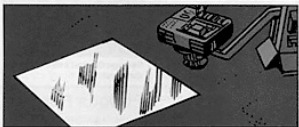
The robot was attacked and apparently driven off by the Avengers, Thor, and Hercules, but not before much of the precinct was destroyed.

The question of whether

or not Evans and Thor—who was also bathed in the green beam and momentarily vanished—were actually transported through time has sparked new debate in the scientific community regarding the time travel issue.

Police staff psychologist Elana Hirshman concluded from her interview with Evans that he was suffering from "temporary post-trauma delusion," and recommended that he be given a month's rest before returning to duty. Asked whether Evans showed any signs of having traveled through time, Hirshman replied, "That's out of my area of expertise. He definitely suffered a shock. Whether this was a side effect of whatever beam he was enveloped in is impossible to tell for sure." Pausing, she then added, "It's my personal opinion that the beam might have made him believe he had seen dinosaurs. Whether he actually did, well, that's not for me to say."

"I did," Evans said in a telephone interview. He is under orders not to see the press directly. "It was quick,



The time machine. (artist's conception)

but I distinctly remember the dinosaur. It was just like those fakes you see in the museums . . . only it moved. It was real."

"Then, before I could run away, I was back in 1989. It was incredibly disorienting."

Scientists across the globe have entered into renewed debate regarding the possibility of time travel. Journals have featured scholarly articles defending both sides of the issue.

"The idea of temporal movement outside normal parameters is, of course, an entertaining notion, especially to readers of science fiction and comic books," Dr. Emilio Lasardo of Italy wrote in a recent article. "But the true scientist knows that there are certain things that just don't hap-

pen. And being 'shot' into the past by a green beam is one of them."

"Is time travel possible?" Lasardo continued. "Without hard laboratory evidence to support the idea, we have to assume that it isn't."

On the other side of the coin, American physicist Dr. Leonard Lloyd wrote: "Modern theories of relativity do account for temporal distortion. Travel at extreme speed is believed to distort time (see SPACE SCUFFLE opposite page). So is the presence of extreme gravitational forces, like those you would find near a black hole. For us to say that time travel is an impossibility just because we don't understand the process is akin to our ancestors saying we could never reach the moon."

Whose Vault?

For years, technophiles across the globe have marveled at the United States Government's Maximum Security Installation for the Incarceration of Superhuman Criminals, otherwise known as the *Vault*. Situated deep in the Rocky Mountains, the Vault is the product of years of research and development of technology to combat the growing problem of super-powered beings on this planet.

This year, though, that technology was shown to be less than effective in holding the hundreds of superhuman criminals incarcerated there. For the second time, there was a mass breakout at the Vault. The resulting chaos, dubbed "Acts of Vengeance" by the popular media, wreaked an estimated \$800 million in property damage across the country.

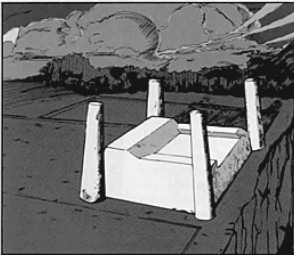
In piecing together how the Vault's security failed, scientists and Vault personnel

have come to the conclusion that some as yet unknown outside force aided the prisoners' escape. The super-criminal known as the *Wizard* broke out of his cell by unknown means, then knocked out Guardsman Prime *Frank Ensign*, who had come to investigate.

The Wizard freed many of the other inmates and, after decimating the ranks of Guardsmen, the group escaped.

It is believed that if Ensign could have defeated the Wizard during their brief confrontation, the entire jailbreak might never have happened. "What's worse," Ensign said, "is that if I had had my old armor, I could have taken him."

At the time of the breakout, the 36 Guardsmen were wearing armor designed and built by STANE INTERNATIONAL—armor that many of the Guardsmen felt was inferior to the earlier model designed by STARK INTERNATIONAL. After the



The maximum security vault.

first Vault breakout, Stark International gave up the contract, taking back their armor. Stane, a rival of Stark, stepped in to fill the void.

Stark International owner and CEO *Anthony Stark* refused to comment on the matter, except to point out that "the Stark-sponsored *Avenger, Iron Man*, was the first on the scene after the latest breakout.

Whether even the Stark version of the Guardsman armor could have defeated the Wizard is in question, as he is considered an extremely cunning and dangerous foe who has single-handedly kept the *Fantastic Four* at bay. Still, there is little doubt that the Stark-designed Guardsman armor was based at least in part on the same technology applied to the *Iron Man* armor, which is considered to be the most powerful combat armor on the planet.

"One of the major limitations of the Stane armor is the lack of the Stark accelerator chips," *David Kirk*, a former Stark employee, said. *Kirk*, who was indirectly involved in the original Guardsman armor design, explained that "Stane tried to duplicate the original design, but they lacked the technology to follow through with it. The new armor's real problem is not

so much power as it is speed. Driving that many systems at once is a drain on even the fastest microprocessor. The original Stark armor's internal systems worked at what I would guess is about four times the speed that the new armor does. That makes for a lot more available power."

This second jailbreak has again raised doubts regarding "normal" humans' ability to deal with super-powered beings, even when using the most modern technology. There are still the human—and superhuman—factors to consider.

Vault processor *Mary McKenna* said, "We can't predict what super-criminals will do. We still don't know how the Wizard got his equipment into the cell with him... as far as we know, it was scientifically impossible. They (super-powered criminals) just play by different rules, rules we can't even comprehend, let alone match."

Although they refuse to divulge specifics, government officials have assured the public that the Vault is being upgraded and improved so that another breakout cannot occur. But the American people, still cleaning up after the mayhem that was *Acts of Vengeance*, do not seem convinced. ■

—Evan Skolnick

Space Scuffle

The United States' first experimental faster-than-light spacecraft, *Starblazer*, was "hijacked" under unknown circumstances in October, making it the first U.S. spacecraft ever to be stolen. As if this were not strange enough, the hijackers are now apparently sanctioned by NASA to explore further into our galaxy in the ship.

Starblazer, in the works for over ten years, was scheduled to launch later in the month of November. *Reed Richards*, world-renowned scientist and leader of the *FANTASTIC FOUR*, had served as an adviser on the project, adding his knowledge of space science and physics to that of the NASA team.

Richards, also known as the stretchable Mr. Fantastic, and the other original members of the *Fantastic Four* all received their incredible powers after they were bathed in cosmic rays while in a spacecraft designed and built by *Richards*. Only days

before the hijacking, *Richards* told the media, "The people here at NASA have asked me at least two hundred times if I had checked *Starblazer*'s cosmic ray shields. At first I was embarrassed, but I eventually realized that it was simply a running joke."

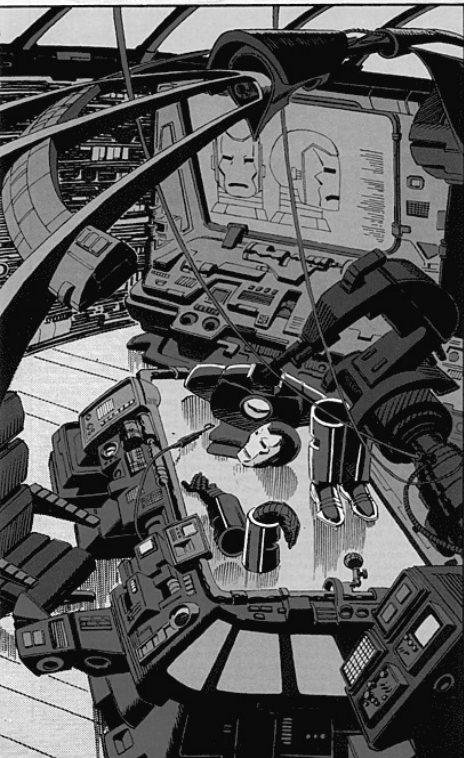
The ship's three fission engines provide thrust capable of propelling *Starblazer* at approximately two and a half times the speed of light, or 550,000 miles per second. Its mission of galaxy exploration was scheduled to last for thirty Earth years, which would have been the equivalent of five years aboard ship due to time distortion. The first target system was Alpha Centauri.

NASA has been very uninformative when asked about the circumstances surrounding the hijacking, refusing to identify the new pilots or explain how they managed to steal the country's most advanced spacecraft. *Reed Richards*, for his part, has told the media that he feels the ship is "in good hands." ■

WITHOUT THE MAN ON THE INSIDE...



IT'S JUST AN EMPTY SHELL.



It's the genius of Tony Stark that created the modern-day miracle of the Iron Man armor, but that armor is just a tool. It's the man who wears the armor who is responsible for Iron Man's many heroic deeds.

Stark Enterprises is dedicated to creating the technology you need to reach *your* fullest potential. From electronic microchips regulating energy use in your home, to prosthetic limbs aiding the physically challenged. From deep below the ocean's surface, to the farthest frontiers of space—and everywhere in-between, Stark is there, with the technology to free humanity from drudgery, so we can pay attention to what's *really* important.

**STARK
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Providing the tools to build
a better world.

International News



Far Left: Excalibur
Left: Gatecrasher, leader of Technet
Below: Police, hot on Excalibur's trail are baffled



Across The Pond . . .

Ever since the team of superhuman adventurers known as EXCALIBUR opened shop in an abandoned English lighthouse, the inhabitants of the British Isles have learned to expect not only the unexpected, but the weird and bizarre, as well. Following an altercation with the band of criminals known as the Crazy Gang, members of Excalibur claimed that they had been victims of a "mind-switch," and had been forced to occupy the villains' bodies even as they battled against their own bodies for survival. The team rebounded from this "identity crisis" just in time to pay a visit to New York City, which was, at the time, caught in the throes of an episode of mass hallucinations, commonly referred to as the "Inferno." The hallucinations, now known to be caused by an orbiting hypno-ray satellite placed by the techno-terrorists known as Advanced Idea Mechanics, proved to be too much for the band of heroes to handle. Various eyewitness reports describe the heroes battling both their fellow team members, and inanimate objects which had seemingly "come to life," during the episode. "You could say that they're

only human, 'cept most of them are mutants!" said one exasperated New York cab driver. To their credit, Excalibur did manage to rescue dozens of citizens who had placed themselves in perilous situations as a result of the hallucinations.

The group returned to England only to face the mystery of an allegedly extradimensional train, which appeared out of nowhere just as a commuter train vanished. Sources close to the investigation claim that the train's point of origin was a so-called "parallel Earth," one in which the Nazis triumphed over England during World War II. Evidently, the incident was important enough to merit the attention of the shadowy *Weird Happenings Organization* (WHO), a paramilitary investigation agency under the command of Brigadier *Alysande Stuart*. During their investigation, WHO uncovered other "dimensional anomalies," among them the discovery of a family of tourists, apparently of extradimensional origin, who appeared to be highly evolved versions of the now-extinct dinosaurs native to our Earth. This "dinosaur family" was less than cooperative in explaining how they reached our Earth, preferring instead to complain incessantly about the weather.

While the existence of the

"Nazi Train" was bizarre enough in itself, even more shocking was the identity of one of its two passengers. Aboard the train was the Nazi, parallel-Earth counterpart to *Dr. Moira McTaggart*, the famous biologist. Her value to the Nazi regime of the other Earth was evidently great enough to justify sending the "Lightning Force" (the alleged Nazi, parallel-Earth version of our own Excalibur) to forcibly retrieve her. This brought the Lightning Force into conflict with Excalibur, who, in their initial meeting, took more than their fair share of lumps from the marauding Nazis. However, Excalibur rallied, and managed to defeat Lightning Force, and force an exchange of prisoners between our Earth and the Nazi, parallel-Earth, who had been holding the vanished train full of commuters. In a turn of events which still has not been fully reconstructed, Excalibur successfully deflected a last-second, treacherous attack by the Nazi, parallel-Earth *Moira McTaggart*, only to vanish seconds later, along with the Nazi train. Excalibur has not been heard from since. However, there has been one brief, unconfirmed sighting of both Excalibur and the errant train, by two East Sussex policemen. They claim that the Excalibur team had "landed" the train

in a local field, and they had gone to investigate. The team members were bizarrely dressed, according to the officers, and were in fact nearly unrecognizable, until the appearance of Excalibur member *Phoenix*. Seconds later, the entire train disappeared yet again, leaving nothing but a quarter-mile ditch. As of press time, there have been no other indications as to Excalibur's whereabouts.

In a related story, Brighton residents have had to adjust to a new band of resident aliens, hailing not from the Caribbean or the Middle East, but from locations outside of our own Solar System. The band of alleged extraterrestrials known as the *TECHNET* have taken up residence on a Brighton pier using unknown means to maintain favorably sunny weather in the area as a form of "rent" for the space. Local merchants welcome the favorable weather, but some residents have expressed fears concerning the aliens themselves, chief among them the issue of the aliens' alleged radioactivity. Local authorities, who secured the deal, assert that these fears are unfounded, adding that the aliens are "probably no more radioactive than you or I." The "aliens'" reason for setting up base on the Brighton pier is still unknown. ■

Lousy Place to Visit, and You Definitely Wouldn't Want to Live There

The tiny island of Madripoor has certainly gouged a none-too-desirable place for itself in the annals of human indecency over the past few centuries, but lately the Far Eastern nation has been turning up the heat. A series of events over the past year has exposed the perversion and lawlessness that passes for everyday life in Madripoor, and even more unusual is that each successive report seems to lead, inevitably, back to the same mysterious man. The gentleman in question is a stocky fellow who goes by the name of "Patch." As part owner of the infamous Princess Bar in Madripoor's Lowtown, "Patch" seems to have been involved in every major big stink to come out of Madripoor in the past twelve months. The exposure of a bizarre cult that reportedly practiced human sacrifices brought the first mention of "Patch," who is generally credited with somehow crippling the cult's operations. He was then seen prowling about Lowtown in the company of the hulking Joe Fixit, who was, at the time, a Las Vegas-based bodyguard and security expert. It has since been confirmed that Fixit is indeed the "Incredible Hulk" (see "Green turns to Gray," in this issue). Fixit, for some unknown reason, had traded in his custom-tailored suits for a pair of ripped purple pants. In the space of two days, Fixit and "Patch," according to independent sources, smashed a slavery ring and wiped out a major cocaine processing plant. How two individuals succeeded in destroying two organizations that had previously seemed beyond the reach of law-enforcement agencies is unknown. "Patch" then turned up in San Francisco, seemingly investigating a series of bizarre diamond thefts and reported vampire



Madripoor — poverty next to power

sightings. His description matches that of an individual who eluded San Francisco police vehicles in a high-speed car chase through the hilly city streets. The situation came to a head in—you guessed it—Madripoor, where a battle between the "vampires" and unidentified parties reportedly erupted in the Prince of Madripoor's castle. Again, "Patch" was somehow involved, yet in what capacity, and to what extent, is unknown.

"Patch" next appeared in connection with the alleged abduction of a local bruiser known as *Roughhouse*, by an aged man who is reportedly a half-mechanical cyborg. Through all this is the common thread of some sort of connection to the drug-infested Central American nation of Tierra Verde. Again, details are sketchy.

How the enigmatic "Patch" has managed to stay alive in a town where trouble makers have the life expectancy of a snowflake in a blast furnace is open to speculation. "He's the best there is at what he does," says one informed observer. Evidently, what "Patch" does best is survive.

As for Madripoor itself, no amount of vigilantism is likely to clean up its act in the near future. The long-standing State Department warning against travel to the island continues to do nothing but enhance its image as a "dangerous playground." A deceptively attractive reputation that most likely contributed to the deaths of the 612 American tourists who lost their lives there during the past year. ■

Panther on the Loose

The former Avenger known as the *Black Panther* has stepped into the harsh spotlight of international scrutiny thanks to his one-man invasion of South Africa earlier this year. The South African government has accused the Panther of a multitude of crimes, among them inciting riots, and attempting to overthrow the government, and has blamed him for the death of a 5-year-old child. Since all sources of news in South Africa are controlled by the government, these reports cannot be confirmed, and the Panther's true reasons for his actions remain unknown.

In his "civilian" identity, the Panther is T'Challa, king of the Central African nation of Wakanda. Wakanda is a reclusive nation, and little is known about its inner workings. However, it is commonly known that, using the resources afforded it by its large supply of the rare metal Vibranium, Wakanda has managed to create technological devices that surpass those of the super power nations. The Panther used one of these devices, a uniquely shaped aircraft, to slip into South Africa undetected. However, he was soon located in a rural town, where he came into conflict with both government security forces and hired security agents. He managed to elude capture and disappear into the surrounding wilderness. The Panther then interfered with the

execution by townspeople of a man accused of being a government spy. During this episode, a 5-year-old black child suffered burns that eventually led to his death. Government sources blame the Panther directly for the child's death, but other reports credit T'Challa with attempting to save the child after he was accidentally set afire. He next appeared in a Johannesburg shopping mall, where he carried out a seemingly unmotivated attack against a man wearing military-style clothing. By this time, search parties had located the Panther's aircraft, but as they attempted to disable the craft, the Panther appeared and flew off in it. He evidently flew to a private estate elsewhere in South Africa, and after a period of eluding the estate's security forces, escaped again. The Panther's motivations for the entire invasion are still unknown, and judging from past attempts to extract information from the secretive Wakandans, they are likely to remain unknown. ■

—Marc Siry



Congress vs. The Real Superpowers!

How the House Backed Off Superhero Registration

It seemed like just another Congressional Subcommittee hearing. Fall was in the air and the leaves were beginning to change in Washington. Congressmen shuffled notes, reporters took them, and everything was being videotaped in the hope that a decent sound bite or even thirty seconds of useable footage might be captured in time for the evening news. This state of affairs lasted through dozens of witnesses and hours of terminally boring testimony. Then the committee door opened and six people wearing ordinary civilian clothes, one of them a child, entered the room.

Exactly two witnesses later, the lid blew off the hearing and Washington found out the hard way that the FANTASTIC FOUR had come to town.

The country's preeminent super-team had traveled to the nation's Capitol at the request of Representative Paul J. Grant, D-Mich., the chair-



Captain America glides past the crowd into the courthouse.



man of the special Congressional Subcommittee on Superhuman Activities. The Subcommittee was created to investigate the activities of super heroes and super-villains in the United States. Its specific purpose was to hear testimony concerning the so-called "super heroes registration act." Other subcommittee members included Rep. Patrick Mullet, D-Mich., Rep. P. Aubrey Becton, R-N.Y., and Rep. Scott Martin, R-Oklahoma.

The proposed law, H.S. 39110, would regulate the activities of such individuals by requiring all super-powered entities operating within the borders of the United States to register with the Federal government. Such individuals would have to submit written reports of their activities to a Federal board of review. It was also suggested those engaging in superhuman actions be taxed and that the funds created by the tax be used to establish a general hazard insurance against their activities. Testimony regarding the proposed law was heard from a variety of individuals and organizations.

The hearings began Thursday, November 2nd. The parade of witnesses

Angry protestors speak out against super-beings.

included military men, construction contractors, reporters, psychiatrists, numerous self-styled "experts" of superherodom, and inevitably several of the super heroes themselves.

Captain America, as a representative of the AVENGERS, appeared the following Monday before the subcommittee. Sitting with the posture of a soldier, his brief but articulate remarks impressed both the Congressmen and audience, as did his rather old-fashioned patriotism. But he wore it with a genuineness that would have been the envy of every politician in America. In his remarks, the Captain spoke of the legacy in this country of individual freedoms; freedoms, he said, whose very existence he has guarded and championed throughout his long career, freedoms he felt would be jeopardized by the proposed law. He also noted that the difficulty in establishing a precise definition of super humans would be a very big stumbling block, noting that even athletes who took drugs such as steroids might qualify by current standards.

Mr. Anthony Stark of STARK INDUSTRIES also appeared before the subcommittee Monday afternoon. While Mr. Stark agreed in the main with Captain America, he felt that some sort of regulation of superhuman activity might be useful, if only because of the ever-growing number of people engaged in the practice. However, he expressed grave reservations about the ability of even the Federal government to effectively license those who decided to break the law using such powers and was afraid that the new regulations would only make catching such superhuman criminals more difficult.

Rick Jones, a long time associate of the Hulk and author of the current best seller, *Sidekick*, testified at some length concerning his experiences with the "Green Goliath" and other super powered beings. It seemed clear from his remarks that the Hulk himself is highly unlikely to accept any sort of Federal registration. And given the fact that the Hulk remains one of the most powerful super humans known, grave questions were raised concerning the enforceability of any such regulatory measure.

Several other super groups, such as X-FACTOR, were unavailable for appearances before the subcommittee despite efforts to locate them and serve them with subpoenas.

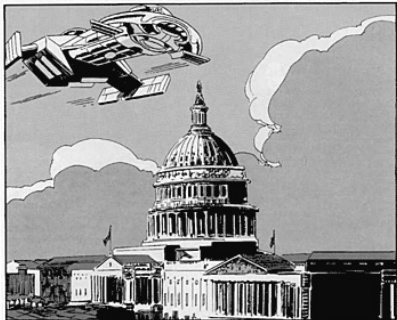
There was a number of arguments in favor of allowing super heroes to continue to operate under the status quo, perhaps the most ingenious of



Congressman Perterra points an accusing finger at the Fantastic Four



Henry Peter Gyrich, former head of the Avengers



The Fantastic Four Pogo Plane arrives at the Capitol.

which was presented by the construction industry, both union and management, noting that super hero activity in New York City had always provided both a cheap means of building demolition as well as a spur to creating new jobs in the construction industry itself.

General Neddington of the army testified concerning the potential value regarding national security that registering super heroes could have, particularly in regard to a possible "super hero gap" the United States may be facing in the near future when other countries accelerate their own super hero development.

At one point, after the testimony of Mr. Hamilton Nathanson, a representative of the National Rifle Association, an alarm was raised in the committee hall and committee members were asked to take shelter. The powerful mutant known as *Apocalypse* was sighted flying in the direction of Washington DC, and it was feared that he was in fact coming to the hearings. The Fantastic Four made preparations to intercept him when it developed that *Apocalypse* was actually over-flying the Capitol and heading out across the Chesapeake Bay toward the Atlantic Ocean. His destination and current whereabouts remain unknown.

Just as order was being restored to the chambers, there was a sudden disturbance. A man who had been sitting in the back of the hall suddenly rose,

removed his hat and coat revealing his true identity, and attacked the Fantastic Four. However, he tripped over some seats and knocked himself out. He was subsequently identified as *Ramrod*, a little known super-villain, whom the FF have never encountered before. His presence and the motive for his attack remain unclear. After security guards removed him from the chambers, testimony resumed.

Mr. Henry Peter Gyrich, a member of the Commission of Superhuman Activities, spoke before the subcommittee. Mr. Gyrich has been associated with superhuman activity for some time dating back to his appointment as head of the Avengers during one phase of their career. He argued for the establishment of a Bureau of Super Human Affairs under the control of a human "czar". At the conclusion of Mr. Gyrich's remarks, the FF were called before the subcommittee.

The original members of the Fantastic Four are well known: Dr. Reed Richards, his wife Susan Richards, his brother-in-law, Jonathan Storm, and his lifelong friend, former test pilot, Benjamin J. Grimm, aka the Thing. Currently, the group's membership has been enlarged to include the former Ms. Marvel, Sharon Ventura, who recently became a She-Thing and has taken an active role in the group's activities. Mr. Grimm, in the meantime, has been restored to normal human form and is somewhat less involved in the group's day-to-day

operation. Dr. and Mrs. Richards brought their son, Franklin, with them to the hearings.

At the beginning of their testimony, Dr. Richards produced a massive series of volumes containing exceptionally detailed accounts of many of the Fantastic Four's adventures. (An abridged version of these documents is already available in hardcover through Simon and Schuster where it reached No. 1 on the New York Times best-seller list in late November.)

Each of the four original members of the Fantastic Four spoke before members of the subcommittee, offering comments and answering questions posed by committee members. There were differences of opinion even within the group itself, but it was clear that all of them felt strongly about the proposed legislation and what they saw as its eventual negative effect on the process of combating super-villains.

During their testimony, a number of super villains appeared in the same fashion as *Ramrod*, attempting to assassinate the Fantastic Four. These included *Flying Tiger*, *Plantman*, and *Quill*, the *Vanisher*, the *Eel*, *Thunderball*, and *Mad Dog*. Even one of the security guards suddenly attacked Dr. Richards but was restrained. None of them succeeded and with the exception of the *Vanisher* who mysteriously vanished, the others were taken into custody.

A small electronic device was captured by the FF and shut off. Dr. Richards suggested that it had had some role in provoking the attacks but its exact nature and maker remain unknown. (Congressman James Pertierra, D-NY, a member of the audience at that time, suggested that Dr. Richards himself had created the device to sway the hearings, but his accusation was subsequently discounted. Congressman Pertierra is running for re-election in a hotly contested district near Albany, N.Y.)

The climax of the Fantastic Four's appearance came near the close of the session. Abruptly and without any prior warning, the subcommittee and members of the audience arose en masse to attack the Fantastic Four. Dr. Richards determined that the small device which he had previously shut off was in fact still generating a field. When he deactivated the machine for good, order was quickly restored. However, it was then discovered that a further number of known felons had attempted to storm the committee room, only to be stopped by the She-Thing, Mr. Grimm, and the Human Torch. These included the *Armado*, *Baron Brimstone*, the



Reed Richards and family, before the congressmen, with his super-powers detection device.

Man-Ape, Orka, Owl, Stilt-Man, and Whirlwind. They were removed and taken away to be charged with disorderly conduct.

Subsequently, at Dr. Richards' suggestion, the final session of the subcommittee was held behind closed doors. At the end of that meeting, the

subcommittee tabled the proposed legislation pending further study (which is a time honored method of effectively killing the measure).

Earlier in his testimony, Dr. Richards was challenged by Congressman Pertierra to create a device that could identify superhumans in a pop-

ulation of ordinary people. During much of the subsequent testimony, Dr. Richards worked unobtrusively on something inside the attaché case he had brought with him to the hearing.

Sources inside Capitol Hill have indicated that during the FF's final session, Dr. Richards produced a small device he had constructed during their appearance. It was apparently a small scale working prototype of a device designed to detect super human powers in people. With the permission of the committee, Dr. Richards activated the device. All the members of the Fantastic Four were instantly identified by the device. And so were some members of the four member subcommittee! The decision to table the bill was reached shortly thereafter according to sources who asked not to be identified.

However, the remaining funds allocated to the subcommittee will be used to complete several ongoing investigations into super human activities by various committee members at specific locales around the globe. Sources close to him suggest that Congressman Grant has already scheduled a trip to the U.S. Virgin Islands to examine the effects of superhuman activity on a restricted population in a limited geographical area.

—Victor Miller/Washington



She-Thing detains Flying Tiger

WOMAN OF THE YEAR:

The Sensational She-Hulk!

What's big, green, and goes ho-ho-ho?

If you said the obvious, then you are out of step, not in touch, and totally unaware of one of the most spectacular success stories of the year, if not the decade.

It involves a woman who is amazing, sensational and unique. But don't say she's incredible.

"Put 'incredible' and 'Hulk,' even a hyphenated Hulk, in the same sentence, and you might get the wrong idea," said ex-assistant D.A. *Jennifer Walters*.

The answer to the question that led this article is none other than the sizzling *She-Hulk*, with the ho-ho-ho coming in her response to learning that she was chosen as our Woman of the Year.

But what does Jennifer Walters have to do with the famed green-skinned adventurer? Quite simple. They're one and the same.

"She-Hulk," you might ask. "Any relation to a certain other Hulk?"

The answer to that is a resounding yes, and that relationship triggered one of the most off-beat success stories of our time.

It started when attorney Jennifer Walters was involved in a shooting incident with the underworld that left her hospitalized and near death. Happily, her cousin happened to be in town and was more than willing to



Jennifer Walters before... and after



▲ Action sequence cut from "SHE-HULK: THE MOVIE."

She-Hulk at Tiboldt Circus. ▼

provide his blood for a transfusion.

Unhappily, her cousin was noted physicist Robert Bruce Banner. Dr. Banner is noted for other things as well, such as turning green and, well, Hulkish, when he gets angry (although circumstances may now have changed. See related story on the Hulk, this issue).

Next thing Jennifer knew, she was well over six feet tall, with green hair and a physique that would turn even the most dedicated woman body builder—there's no other way to say it—green with envy. At the time she had difficulty coping, and was seen rambling about in little more than a torn white shirt.

She's done a complete 180 degree turn since then. Her white shirts are Esprit and dovetail with her always chic dress-for-success power outfits. Her hair is luxuriously coiffed, and her credentials are impeccable: a member of the New York bar, a former member of the FANTASTIC FOUR (although these days who isn't, it seems), and a current member of the AVENGERS (the originals, not the Left Coast knock-offs).

When we visited with the sultaness of swat, she described her life as being in a sense of cheerful disarray—"Sometimes I'm going disarray," she smiled, "and sometimes I'm going dataway."

Her apartment definitely matched her lifestyle ("I needed more than 72 hours notice that you were coming to even have hope of getting the place in shape," she told us). Most curious



thing—a sculpture she had made of crushed together Lady Bic razors.

"Had real trouble shaving my legs," she said. "Broke about a dozen razors." When asked why she didn't just give up after one she smiled ruefully and said, "Ever try to hammer a nail and bend it? You stop right after? No, if you're determined, you keep on trying because you're sure that this time it'll work. And I'm very determined." She shook her head. "You should see what I have to go through for a manicure."

Now was she kidding? It's hard to tell with the She-Hulk. Hard to determine the fiction of her career from fact. She's filled us in on what her year has been like and we've done the best we can to verify it. But you, reader, have to determine what's going on with She-Hulk, and what she's having us off on:

DEFINITE: She's been spending time with the Avengers, helping to save the world as always.

DEFINITE: She helped bag the notorious Ringmaster and his Circus of Crime (and hey, Ringy—get a new schtick, huh?).

QUESTIONABLE: She was kidnapped by a gorilla with a man's head and convinced she'd been decapitated.

EXTREMELY QUESTIONABLE: She galavanted through a berserk playground of realistic animated TV shows.

DEFINITE: She tried to prevent the highjacking of the experimental NASA faster-than-light shuttle, Starblazer, and didn't succeed...

DOUBTFUL: ... and in deep space encountered a trucker dressed like a hog, not to mention battled a killer teddy bear, all in the middle of an intergalactic greasy spoon.

DEFINITE: She's gotten a job working as an assistant for D.A. Towers...

QUESTIONABLE: ... but while there has been aided by an aging comic book heroine...

GIVE IT UP: ... and Santa Claus.

The fact that she is also the subject of a highly controversial bio-pic "She-Hulk: The Movie," has fueled speculations that she might go Hollywood, but, she says, she has no plans to do so. L.A.'s loss is N.Y.'s gain.

Whereas early in her career she was sometimes—you should pardon the expression—normal looking, She-Hulk is now big, green and gorgeous all the time. She wouldn't have it any other way, she claims, saying "Whenever I'm in court, the judges have a real tough time overruling my objec-



She-Hulk trying to blend in with a tour group. Think they'll notice her?

tions, and the defense rarely butts in while I'm questioning witnesses." She smiles and looks oddly coquettish for someone who can crack marble. "I'd love to go one-on-one with Kuzak—if you know what I mean," she adds with a lusty laugh.

Ho-Ho-Ho indeed. —J. David Guntly/
New York



All This And Looks, Too!!

Her humor is hip, her manner is flip. When she's relaxing in her luxurious Manhattan flat, she talks with tongue planted firmly in cheek, and a wit that is as devastating as her right cross. Her hobbies are "bashing the baddies" and "catching up on the works of Shakespeare, Bronte, and Dickens."

(Although to be honest, the only books we noticed outside of legal stuff were a couple of romance bodice rippers, and a well thumbed copy of some horror thing called *Fear Book*. Then again, maybe She-Hulk—Shulkie, to her friends—is intending to have a library put in. She's obviously planning some sort of renovation because she was always talking about "Breaking down the Fourth Wall.")

Our own Janet Van Dyne gets the grand tour of Shulkie's luxurious digs. If adventures in decorating has a name...

QUASAR

They're weapons for combating evil. They're artifacts from some ancient, possibly alien civilization. They're energy-transmitters that may make superconductors, cold fusion, and anti-gravitons seem passe. They're fashion accoutrements worn by the newest and youngest member of the superhuman peacekeeping team, the AVENGERS. They're the "quantum-bands" worn by the maskless blond crusader known as *Quasar*.

In a document just released by the Presidential Commission on Superhuman Activities, the wrist bracelets worn by Quasar are described by the Commission's science panel as "two bands composed of some flat black metallic substance, composition unknown, each studded with seven golden oval-shaped convex lenses." The report goes on to describe how in some unknown manner the gems transmit various electromagnetic energies, and even more startlingly, can be used to form "glowing translucent shapes and objects seemingly composed of energy." While scientists now consider energy in the electromagnetic spectrum to have dual natures, behaving both like a wavelength and like a particle, neither property of energy can fully explain the tangible holograms which the young adventurer has been observed to generate from his wrist-weapons.

According to Dr. Gilbert Vaughn, former professor of physics at MIT, who had the opportunity to examine the quantum-bands prior to their acquisition by Quasar several years ago, "The bands are energy transformers. They absorb energy as if they were batteries and transmit that stored energy as if they were lasers. They can be attuned to virtually any wavelength of energy, from mile-long radio waves to micromillimeter-long x-rays. Moreover, they can be focused on specific power-sources, anything from a flashlight battery to the most highly energetic object in the known universe, the quasi-stellar object, or quasar."

Unlike most energy devices, the quantum-bands seem to have no movable parts. How are they operated then? Vaughn believes that the wristbands create some sort of interface with the electrical field of a human mind in order to enable the wearer to direct its input and output. "(Quasar) thinks, and the wristbands respond directly to the directed thought," he states.

Dr. Vaughn conjectures about

the quantum-bands' capacity to create semi-solid manifestations of energy. "I think what we're seeing here is the binding of photons with some unknown subatomic particle in order to create a whole new sort of material, part-matter and part-energy. The constructs take whatever form the manipulator can visualize, possibly through some sort of biofeedback." What the upper limits to the wristbands' capacity to manipulate energy are, Vaughn could not determine. He believes that it may be potentially limitless. Quasar himself scoffed at this assessment and said he's definitely got limits.

Apparently it was Quasar who dubbed the bracelets "quantum-bands." A "quantum" is a discrete bundle of energy, the indivisible unit in which waves may be emitted or absorbed. What does Quasar believe the quantum-bands are? He's declined to speculate. Dr. Vaughn suggests that they are "artifacts of power created by some extraterrestrial intelligence or culture far in advance of our own."

Dr. Talia Kruhm, at the Department of Energy's research project "Pegasus," differs. "Though I've not had the opportunity to examine them, I'd posit them to be terrestrial in origin, even as is the body armor of *Iron Man* and the hammer of the supposed thunder god, *Thor*."



Quasar, the Cosmic Avenger.

Whatever their origin, the quantum-bands worn by the newest Avenger have the scientific community buzzing. Whether scientists will have the opportunity—and ability—to duplicate these unique artifacts so that their energy-harnessing potential can be used to solve some of the world's energy needs remains to be seen. For the time being anyway, they remain powerful curios worn by Quasar, the cosmic Avenger.

—Michael Ellis/

New York

THE BOY IN THE BANDS

Quasar is a quiet, unassuming man in his mid-twenties who happens to be in undisputed possession of two of the most formidable personal weapons on the planet. At a recent press conference, the new Avenger was asked what he intends to do with his great power. He hesitated a moment and then stated somewhat abashedly: "My mission is to keep this world secure from possible extraterrestrial threats."

Is he kidding? Or does he truly believe in the existence of extraterrestrial visitors? An unequivocal yes to the latter, though he declined to estimate how many of the "alien scaries" reported in the past decades may have been real. "I've not been around long enough to have investigated any of them," he explained.

Quasar also refused to discuss how he acquired the quantum-bands from Dr. Gilbert Vaughn, who had been studying them under a grant from STARK (now STANE) INTERNATIONAL (see above). But if the Avengers were willing to accept the relative neophyte into their ranks, it is improbable that he gained possession of the bracelets by illicit means.

Is he frightened that he will misuse the quantum-bands' power, perhaps even subconsciously? The young Avenger stated, "It takes a good deal of concentration to make the bands work. I've no evidence I've ever made them work while asleep or unconscious. I practice a lot with them, constantly trying to hone my control over them. I also keep in good physical condition, because I believe a fit body is the key to a fit mind."

As his reputation grows and the world gets a better idea of what his cosmic bracelets can do, is he concerned that there are those who may covet his wondrous wristbands with their great potential for destruction? Says Quasar: "I think about it on occasion. There are all sorts of whackos out there. Fortunately, none of them knows where I live."

WOULD YOU BELIEVE A SPIDER COULD FLY?



PHOTO: MARVEL TRAFFIC HELICOPTER

What's red & blue and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound? Guess again.

"It's not fair, I tell you! It's not fair!" protested a voice beneath layers of a concrete substance known as Adhesive X. "We were the perfect match—my paste versus Spider-Man's webs! The Wizard never told me he could make giant fists with his web or shoot rays from his fingertips." The local boys in blue chiseled furiously to liberate the petrified form of the criminal known as Trapster, ignoring his ranting.

The Trapster's words were sound. During a period this fall when known

felons were mysteriously attacking super heroes not previously associated with them, a number of the world's underworld figures experienced Spider-Man's strange new powers.

"I had vanquished the wall-crawler by utilizing my ability to manipulate gravity," boasted Graviton. "I levitated the establishment which publishes your celebrated tripe [the *Daily Bugle* Building], then I lowered the entire structure on the helpless web-slinger."

"Imagine my surprise when I con-

fronted him days later—*flying*, no less!" he continued. "Never being one to allow business to remain unfinished, I decided to polish off the webbed menace once and for all. But this time, when I increased the pull of gravity beneath him, he just shrugged off the effects and blasted me with an energy beam the likes of which I have never encountered in all my years as a physicist."

Spider-Man demonstrated the first signs of his new powers outside the physics lab of Empire State University, where Dr. Maxwell Lubisch, professor of quantum physics, was conducting an experiment to discover extra-dimensional energy sources. Lubisch's experiment had caused a power feedback which overloaded the university's electrical system. Spider-Man grabbed a live power line which had been severed due to the experiment. Witnesses swear the masked adventurer felt no ill effects from the lethal charge of electricity he received.

Immediately following his second encounter with Graviton, Spider-Man learned the true nature of his extradimensional powers. A giant, six-armed, three-faced robot attacked the Amity Point Nuclear Power Plant on Long Island. As Spider-Man flew to intercept it, Dr. Lubisch, who had been kidnapped by an unknown party, was forced to use his portable energy projector upon the masked hero.

"This ugly man broke into my lab and bullied me into devising a portable energy projector derived from the same technology which he assumed had given Spider-Man his extra powers," Lubisch explained. "But when I turned the beam upon the web-slinger, it didn't remove his powers as the man had hoped it would. Rather, it enhanced them even further, and also garbed him in a very bizarre looking costume."

At this point, Spider-Man seemed to have become fully aware of his predicament, and he met the robot head-on in an explosive battle. After defeating the mysterious construct, witnesses observed Spider-Man dressed in his familiar red and blue costume. He has not exhibited any of his enhanced powers since that incident, and it is assumed that the powers imparted to the webbed hero withdrew when the crisis had abated.

Extensive research reveals that the costume Spider-Man wore during this battle belongs to an alleged extradimensional entity known as Captain Universe. Dr. Lubisch revealed that his energy experiments had presumably altered the Enigma Force.



"Look! Up in the sky! It's— Spider-Man?!"

which comprises Captain Universe, as it sought to possess Spider-Man, leaving him sans costume or awareness of his purpose.

Monty Walsh, a former cat burglar who was once a recipient of the Cap-

tain Universe powers, told reporters that the Enigma Force increases its candidate's strength level by a factor of 50. "So, let's see: Spider-Man can lift, what, ten tons?" he calculated. "That means—whew! Good ol' Spidey

was probably the strongest hero this world has ever seen!"

This reporter would like to believe that Spider-Man is much happier without the extra burden and extra responsibility his new powers conveyed. —Glenn Herdling New York.

Among the other known menaces to confront this super Spider-Man were the *Brothers Grimm*, *Dragon Man*, the Adamantium laced robot *Tess-One*, powerhouses such as *Titania*, *Goliath*, and even *Magneto* himself. Unsubstantiated rumors also report that a battle was staged between Spider-Man and a gray behemoth at the ruins of Roosevelt Island. The only eyewitnesses were two boys named *Stan Queen* and *Steve Wilson*, and our own ace photographer, *Peter Parker*.

"It was totally rad," Steve exclaimed. "Like, Spider-Man knocked the dude right into orbit!" Their account cannot be verified.



Although this scene was photographed late at night, it seems to reveal that the Incredible Hulk is still alive. Impossible? Not as impossible as Spider-Man apparently defeating the gray giant.

Grapevine

A New Bohemian?

It seems that **DAMAGE CONTROL**, the self-appointed super hero cleanup crew, and their new owners, **CARLTONCO**, are having a little trouble cleaning up their own in-house messes. A few months ago, they braved a dispute in which the new owners refused to honor old contracts. And now, *Mrs. Hoag*,

Director of Operations, will be jumping ship to work on the President's Commission on Superhuman Activities. When asked if Carltonco had anything to do with her leaving, she gave a very dignified, "No comment." Of course, it could all have to do with the fact that Mr. Hoag and the President both belonged to the Bohemian Club in college—that group of elitists who wanted to take over the world but settled on just controlling its major corporations. Do you think? ■



Fatal Attraction

Multimillionaire, *Tony Stark*, is one man who surely knows "Love Hurts." He and heiress *Cathy Dare* made some pretty sordid headlines this year, when after a torrid love affair and split, Dare shot Stark, shattering his spine. Tony said she was just too possessive. No kidding. Tony is back on his feet again these days, thanks to a new microchip developed by his company, **STARK ENTERPRISES**. But his troubles may not be over. One anonymous source told this paper that Dare is in fact writing Tony demented "love" letters from her psychiatric ward. After all, her last words in court were: "I'll see you later." ■



Scarlet Starlet

Model *Mary Jane Watson-Parker* will soon be a familiar face on our TV screen, apparently. She'll be playing one of those rich witch roles: Sybil on "Secret Hospital." But lest you think this is Mary Jane's first attempt at acting, never fear. You'll be happy to know she appeared in high school productions of "Romeo and Juliet" and "A Streetcar Named Desire." On top of that, she also puts in a stint dancing at the Gloom Room in NYC—and that certainly qualifies her to act on "Secret Hospital." Perhaps photog hubby *Peter Parker* (author and pictaker of **WEBS**) can put out an expose on his starlet wife. No? ■

Musical Mates

Okay, we know it's hard to keep up with the romantic lives of the FANTASTIC FOUR, but let's try. *Johnny Storm*, the *Human Torch*, used to be in love with the *INHUMAN*, *Crystal*, and is now married to the blind sculptress, *Alicia Masters*, who was the long-time girl-

friend of *Ben Grimm*, *The Thing*, who is now dating *Ms. Marvel*, who was turned into a "She-Thing" because of cosmic rays encountered while battling the villain *Fasaud* in *Aquira*, and who also has a pretty serious hang-up about men since her brutal attack at the hands of a street gang. Whew! The only ones not in this super hero soap opera are *Reed* and *Sue Richards*,

who rejoined the FANTASTIC FOUR this year. But, this just in to complicate matters: *The Thing* has reverted back to his human state, leaving *Ms. Marvel* with the chips on her shoulders. Reports are that the two are still friendly, but will *Ben* continue to subscribe to the old adage that "Looks are only . . . er . . . rock deep?" ■



Avengers West Coast—Peyton Place on the Pacific?

Elsewhere, some other couples . . . or former couples . . . seem to be getting along nicely. *The Wasp* and ex-hubby *Hank Pym* are both working "hand in hand" for the AVENGERS WEST COAST these days. The two broke up years ago when *Pym* suffered temporary insanity, or mind control, and joined the *Masters of Evil*. And what about those juicy

rumors that have connected *Pym* with both *Firebird* and *Tigra*? Can even a Master of Size fit 3 women in his life? In other Avengers news, it seems the *Vision*, long-time member of the Avengers, has had a facelift. Instead of his old tried and true costume, he now wears only white from head to toe and speaks in a mechanistic monotone. What's the reason for this formal wear and speech? A reassembling has been hinted at. It's one of THE mysteries of the year!

And has wife *Scarlet Witch* been seen standing a little too close to movie star/super hero *Wonder Man*? Now we're all wondering what's what with the Witch! ■ —Renée Witterstaetter

Blind Date From Hell

In the unlikely love department, the latest super hero to score some schmunty was the "Incredible Hulk." When we asked alleged green-giant girlfriend *Mario Chandler* if the Hulkster lived up to his "Incredible" sobriquet she declined to comment and denied the whole affair, but we have it from sound sources that the big guy met no-comment *Chandler* while he was working for casino owner *Michael Berrengett* at the *Coliseum Casino* in Vegas. Any takers on a double date? ■



For Tony Stark—Things Can Only Get Better



Tony Stark after the shooting, being rushed by paramedics to L.A. General Trauma Center.

The next time someone in the executive washroom quips, "Man, it's a WAR out there!" don't laugh. You could be next.

Early this year, in what was perhaps the most shocking news to hit the business community in 1989, *Anthony Stark*, owner and C.E.O. of STARK ENTERPRISES, was found shot and near death at his palatial Pacific Coast estate north of Los Angeles. Arrested on suspicion of attempted murder was Stark's frequent companion of the past few months, 23-year-old *Kathleen Karen Dare*. And while this arrest put the shooting more in the category of a romance gone wrong, rather than the result of any professional rivalry, its effects were nonetheless felt in trade circles the world over.

The end seemed inevitable: a brutal, unfitting finish for a man who had been through so much in his relatively short life. Having inherited a small electronics firm from his father, young Tony Stark had quickly built those holdings up to form STARK INDUSTRIES, a pioneering commercial venture that, ironically, made much of its initial profit from munitions manufactured for the United States military. But it was through that same commitment that Stark's brilliance produced its greatest creation: the once and present Avenger known as *Iron Man*. Expanding his company into the globe-spanning STARK INTERNATIONAL, the tireless magnate seemed on top of the world—until he fell prey to the one foe his armored bodyguard couldn't battle for him: alcohol. It was only in recent months that the battered but unbeaten Tony Stark put his life back on track, leading Stark Enterprises to the forefront of America's aggressive young

companies. An accomplishment that meant little to the .38 caliber bullet that shattered the nerve bundles along his spine.

But Fate, if not just, is occasionally kind. Through the efforts of Dr. *Charles Inque*—surgical specialist brought in by fellow entrepreneur, *Rae LaCoste*—Tony Stark's life was saved. However, because of irreparable damage done to neural clusters around Stark's spine, the millionaire industrialist was told that he would never walk again.

The ripple effect hit the business world immediately. *Marcy Pearson*, head of Public Relations for Stark Enterprises, was quickly promoted to Vice President, and began to assume many of Mr. Stark's former duties. It was widely thought that Stark was preparing to step down from his position of control, and that Pearson was being groomed to replace him.

Stark's increased inactivity, apparently seen as a sign of weakness in some corners, is generally conceded to be the cause of several hostile takeover attempts, both legal and otherwise, that soon followed. A series of sabotage strikes by a costumed thug called *The Fixer* was eventually thwarted by *Iron Man*, who seemed more and more in evidence as his employer's public appearances decreased. Theories abound as to which of Stark's many competitors may have hired *The Fixer*, but to date no proof has surfaced to point a definitive finger.

In the weeks that followed, Tony Stark seemed determined that his medical condition would not be the catalyst for further assaults on his holdings. He virtually disappeared from sight, working behind the scenes to increase *Iron Man's* public pre-

sence. This policy was instrumental in uncovering a rogue cell of FBI agents who had been cooperating with the MAGGIA in an attempt to eliminate the criminal cartels known as HYDRA and A.I.M. Even the death of *Whitney Frost*, ex-leader of the Maggia—and a woman once linked romantically to Stark—could not bring the increasingly reclusive businessman back into the public eye.

All of which helped make the recent pre-trial hearing for his accused assailant one of the biggest media events of the year. Defended by *Bert Hindel*, recently fired as head of Stark Enterprises' legal staff, *Kathleen Dare* painted a picture of drunkenness and abuse, claiming that she had shot her lover in self defense. But overwhelming testimony by Stark's friends and associates quickly put the *Hinder* strategy on shaky ground. Then, in a brilliant piece of legal theater orchestrated by S.E. attorney *Felix Alvarez*, Ms. Dare's history of mental instability—and evidence that she may have inflicted physical violence on previous paramours—were presented. As a result, Ms. Dare was ruled unfit to stand trial, and was turned over to the California Board of Mental Health.

The respect and friendship shown by his supporters seemed to have a profound effect on Tony Stark. For immediately following the hearing he announced that he was not stepping down from Stark Enterprises after all. (As a result, rumor has it that dissension has begun to spread in the S.E. ranks, not the least of which springs from still-vice president *Marcy Pearson*.)

But the last chapter in this saga had yet to be written. For it was then learned that a major breakthrough in biotech technology had occurred at an East Coast experimental facility called CORDCO, INC. When Cordco board members refused to honor Tony Stark's request that they use him as a guinea pig, he simply bought the company. And, under the supervision of medical innovator Dr. *Erica Sondheim*, a specially programmed "organic computer" was implanted in Stark's spine. The result: a miracle. The biotech directed his body's own systems to repair the nerve damage, regaining for a courageous Tony Stark the use of legs he thought never to feel again.

Yes, it was quite a year for Anthony Edward Stark. And if, as the saying goes, the past is prologue... 1990 should be interesting indeed! —David

Michelinie/Los Angeles

Unabridged X

THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF X

by Charles Xavier

Anti-mutant hysteria, mutant registration, the super powers registration act, Genosha . . . all of these were foreseen by Professor Charles Xavier in the suppressed sections of his only book, *The Structure and Function of X*, now commercially available in its entirety for the first time.

Originally published (in a highly abridged form), as *The Structure and Function of the X Factor as it relates to Human Genetic Potential*, it was viewed as an important work in gene sequencing, and still serves as a textbook for graduate courses on human mutation. That book, however, was less than half of the one Xavier sent to his publisher in the late fifties. The original was a hodgepodge of genetics, social theory, psychology, philosophy, mantic leaps and political agendas.

Appearing in the age of positivism and scientific purism, it was seen as a throwback to the early days of science, when such mixed books were commonplace. Thus, the original publishers, *National Timely Atlas Books*, though impressed with Xavier's genetic work, were so scandalized by his "indiscretion" that they excised over two-thirds of the book, reducing it to a dry science text.

This did not stop the circulation of the unabridged work. Pirate copies lay beside *Siddhartha*, *Das Kapital* and *Being and Time* on the night stands of many radical college students in the sixties, and copies of "X" were carried by students at the infamous riot at Kent State College where three prominent demonstrators were shot by Vault guardsmen.

In the seventies, the full book was supposed to be released by *Worthington Books*, but *National Timely Atlas Books* was able to put a stop to that plan. However, their rights have finally lapsed and now *Magnus Publishing* brings out the complete work. We can see clearly how prophetic Xavier's words were, especially his fear of large scale anti-mutant hysteria and mutant enslavement. These fears were not the most controversial ideas in his book.

The most controversial of Xavier's ideas, and most central to his premise, is the construct labeled "X." This biological/ psychological/ sociological



entity might best be described as the "other" (i.e. anything which is alien) and the reaction it engenders. In biological terms, X is the interaction of the mutant gene with the organism as a whole. It is thus a holistic interaction, and not a specific site on the gene map, which constitutes X. In its psychological moment, X is the individual reacting to him or herself as a mutant. Similarly, X is also the situation of the mutant in society. For Xavier, X can be a positive interaction, wherein the organism/self/society adjusts to and benefits from the other (which Xavier calls the X factor), or the interaction can be harmful. In biology, this is evinced by the "fatal gene." 99% of mutations are of this sort; the organism responds to the mutation by self termination. The psychological parallel is the self which cannot accept itself as a mutant. While the biological form of negative X was thought by Xavier to be untreatable, he believed that an individual could be helped in coming to terms with her or his mutant ability. In the same way, he thought that societies could learn to accept mutants and benefit from their special abilities.

These benefits were first realized by X-Men in the mutant super heroes, the X-Men, who valiantly gave their lives to save the world. (See "X-Men: Ghosts, Or A New Machine?" article in this magazine.) Xavier hoped that this sort of will-full cooperation between humans and mutants could stave off what he believed to be the greatest threat to mutants, the possibility of their enslavement and exploitation. His book proposes a plan to set up a chain of schools which would help young mutants learn how to use their powers for the common good. He believed that these students could even-

tually be "mainstreamed," with public schools having special mutant education programs. When this phase of human-mutant relations would be reached, Xavier believed that all anti-mutant prejudice would be reduced to a minor crackpot fringe.

Hopefully, the ready availability of this book will bring the mainstream reader in contact with Xavier's dream, opening their minds and helping us escape from his nightmare. —review by Hank McCoy Phd.

Yellow Cape, No Pants

SIDEKICK

by Rick Jones



If you're looking for some great beach reading, try this new autobiography by rock star/kid sidekick/super hero Rick Jones. I don't know how much of it can be believed (did Rick really single-handedly stop an outer space war?) but who cares! I haven't had this much fun since Janet Van Dyne's tell-all exposed on the sex lives of the super endowed.

If Rick is to be believed, he was an auxiliary member of the AVENGERS, heading a "teen brigade" of ham radio operators who would report trouble to their super-heroic friends. Next, he became *Captain America's* kid sidekick, replacing "Bucky" in role and costume. Later, he claims he shared space with *Captain Marvel* (the original one, kids!) and that only one of them could exist in this dimension at a time. And, oh yeah, he's also responsible for causing Dr. Bruce Banner to become the Hulk.

Well, if you believe that, I've got some great real estate in Latveria I'd like to sell you, and Rick has some more great tales he'd love to tell you! I don't want to spoil the fun, so run out and pick up a copy of this breezily written tome before it's censored by the reality police!

—review by April May

Milestones/Transitions

JAILED: Alpha Flight, the Canadian super hero group, was jailed several months ago because they took action against a group of American super criminals, including the Scorpion and the Owl. Alpha Flight had been offered a chance to join forces with the government, but had refused because they did not want their actions dictated. At that point, the Canadian government enacted the Emergency Powers Act—a law originally established to control French Canadian Nationalists. Under this law, Alpha Flight was ordered not to act as a crime fighting group. There is no word on when the group will face trial for confronting the super felons. They will also be questioned on several other strange events including an attack on a small town, and a rain of dead fish which spelled out "Alpha Flight" when they hit the ground.

REASSEMBLED: Reportedly the **Vision**, long time member of the Avengers, has been taken apart piece by piece and reassembled. Instead of his old costume, he now wears only white. And from newscasts and interviews with the Vision, many reporters have said his personality is also very different. The Avengers themselves refuse to comment.



The New Vision

FACING CHARGES: Senator John Powers will be facing charges this month, after the vigilante known as the Punisher and an informant in the Senator's own ranks disclosed a scheme that was robbing the government of millions of dollars. In the Navy Boat Building Affair, Senator Powers received kickbacks from the Underwater Boat Corporation, which was billing the government large sums of money for small parts, such as \$800 toilet seats. The scheme came to light when the Punisher kidnapped the informant to save his life, and hijacked a nuclear submarine. Powers sent a second sub in pursuit, and the Punisher aimed armed missiles at an undisclosed Virginia town in order to gain the President's attention. At the end of the conflict, the vigilante fell from the side of the submarine and escaped. The informant, whose name is not being disclosed for security reasons, survived. It is not yet known if Powers will face attempted murder charges as well.

POWERS ENHANCED: Spider-Man, the controversial crimefighter, has acquired some new powers. He has recently exhibited some uncharacteristic abilities that include extreme strength, the ability to fly, and an energy beam. According to some experts, these powers have spontaneously appeared in other people in the past, including an ex-astronaut, Ray Coffin.

TAKEN HOSTAGE: Spider-Man and the Punisher joined forces on December 10 when the DAILY BUGLE staff was taken hostage by a group of neo-Nazis who felt their views were not being aired in the paper. Guderian, the leader, claimed to receive messages from angels who instructed him to write a piece for the Bugle's front page. He intended to hold the staff hostage until his views were printed. Several hostages were threatened, including staffer Betty Brant, and wife of photographer Peter Parker—Mary Jane Watson-Parker. Disaster was averted when Spider-Man and Punisher worked together to free the hostages. Several terrorists were killed.

ESCAPED: Rusty Collins, a mutant associated with X-Factor, recently escaped from the Vault with superhuman felon, the Vulture, and is now wanted for questioning on the Vulture's whereabouts. Authorities believe Collins may have aided the Vulture, who somehow acquired a modified set of wings, which he hid under his bed. Collins was being held for not registering as a mutant.



John Walker

DIED: John Walker, the man who replaced Captain America for a few months this year, was shot to death in Washington D.C. as he was about to make an announcement at a public gathering. An assassin, dressed as a member of the Watchdogs, shot Walker and was then shot and killed himself. The Watchdogs are a fundamentalist, rightwing, paramilitary group who had allegedly killed Walker's parents. It is widely alleged that Walker had killed several of their members in revenge. However, at this time the government says that it believes Walker's assailant was acting alone and that there was no conspiracy to kill the erstwhile Captain America.

INVESTIGATED: Marc Spector, multimillionaire, is being investigated for tax fraud right after the media bonanza of the Leona Helmsley mess. Spector, a Wall Street tycoon and financial wizard, is also under investigation for the alleged robbery of an FBI office in Brooklyn. Spector is not speaking to the press at this time, and the FBI will not say what, if anything, was stolen.

MOURNED: A small, private service was held December 15th for SHIELD agent Timothy "Dum Dum" Dugan and his wife, who were reportedly killed by enemies of the agency this year. Several high ranking members of SHIELD were in attendance, though the agency has been disbanded. No arrests have been made in the Dugan slayings, and the file remains open.

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—V. Von Doom

X-Men: Ghosts, Or A New Machine?



The X-Men (from left to right): Havok, Rogue, Colossus, Storm, Wolverine, Shadowcat, Dazzler, and Longshot.

The X-MEN are dead.
A simple statement, and one you would think incontrovertible. Whether

touted as heroes or feared as yet another example of the gene mutations at work among us, that they are dead would not seem open to discus-

sion. Yet a series of circumstances and a list of "sightings" that rival in frequency UFO reports or encounters with Big Foot would indicate that this might



Days of future past: One of the heroic X-Men battles barbarians on the streets of Dallas.

not be the case.

The X-Men, a team of mutant super beings controversial in their own right, were allegedly brought to their death while fighting off the attack of yet another alleged pan-dimensional being, identified as the *Adversary*, in downtown Dallas last year. In a massive fight centered in the otherwise vacant Eagle Plaza skyscraper (and captured on live TV by National Public Radio correspondent *Neal Conan*) eight of the X-Men gave up their lives in order to stop the *Adversary's* rampage of destruction. Or did they?

"I don't see how they possibly could have come through that alive," Neal Conan, a sober, thoughtful reporter with years of experience under his belt, commented from his Washington, DC bureau office. "I've been in a lot of tense situations—the Persian Gulf, Nicaragua—but I'd never seen anything like this before. One minute they were here, the next, gone. Now you may not like mutants, but they willingly gave themselves when others would have hesitated."

Forge was the only mutant present who apparently escaped unscathed. Medicine chief of the Cheyenne, he attributes the X-Men's deaths to a mystic force. When asked if they are dead, he says, "I felt them go." When asked if he killed them, he will only say, "I cast the spell . . . I couldn't be a part of it."

What was captured on tape and broadcast to millions throughout the world was a scene that froze the blood in America's veins, bringing home for perhaps the first time the malevolence and danger now present among us. A creature impossible to describe save

as the embodiment of evil was destroyed by Forge. The X-Men (and a human companion, *Madelyne Pryor*) were seen to be transformed into pure light, matter converted into energy. That energy was then hurled at the creature, and the creature was no more. Nor were the X-Men.

But then who or what are the individuals who are sighted—or leave their calling card—at hot spots around the globe? Are they imposters, ghosts, or yet another manifestation of this mutant plague?

"It was the oddest thing," Neal Conan fanned through a group of photos on his desk. "A few months after the mess in Dallas, there was a situation in downtown Denver, and also out at Red Rocks Amphitheater. No one's quite sure what happened, but after the network coverage of Dallas, people on the scene are sure they spotted the X-Men. People, reputable reporters, take pictures, but when they're developed, nothing's there. You tell me: Would they make this stuff up?"

Conan's become the unofficial

archivist for these bizarre events. Perhaps because of his close association with their "deaths," or because of his world-wide news net, people now contact Conan when they think they've seen the legendary figures. "There've been sightings from Beverly Hills to Madripoor, in New York City and the Australian outback. These guys get around more than Elvis!"

But if the X-Men are dead, why have there been so many sightings? Why will the public not allow them to rest in peace?

"The X-Men have assumed mythic proportions," commented *Jane Yolen*, noted folklorist and professor at Smith College. "Perhaps because of their very public deaths, perhaps because they belong to a persecuted minority, the public exhibits guilt over the X-Men's heroic sacrifice, and can't let them go. I believe the X-Men are ghosts—but ghosts created by the public's conscience."

But then what about the incident in Australia? Condemned world wide for its racist regime of oppression, the

Those who perhaps would know best whether the X-Men are alive or dead are their fellow mutants, those who have worked with them and who would have deeper insight into this alien culture. However, when trying to contact *Nightcrawler* and *Shadowcat*, the two X-Men who escaped death in Dallas, they could not be found. The lonely, isolated light-house they inhabit off the west coast of Britain is now under the jurisdiction of the Weird Happenings Organization affiliated with the British Government, and they would not comment. X-FACTOR, a sister-group to the X-Men, has not been seen for some time.

Milestones



Peas from the same pod?

Rumors link "Patch" of Madripoor to Wolverine of the X-Men.



helping her, said to be Storm, Dazzler, Rogue and Psylocke of the X-Men. Not only did they too appear and disappear in thin air, but someone noted that Storm, the taciturn leader of the X-Men, was dancing with an exotic male dancer, in typical California-chic clothes and make-up. I've studied Storm's character over the years, and this certainly would not be the case. Clearly now, the X-Men are seen as the 'guardian angels,' if you will, of mutants and others in trouble with the system."

Noted Nobel Prize-winning geneticist *Motira MacTaggart* has a different, and more sinister, view of this phenomenon. "It has come to my attention that in the more recent X-Men sightings, the one in New York City in particular, the 'X-Men' have been said to act in a more erratic and hostile manner. In recent years we have seen the rise of combat cyborgs (the mating of man and machine to increase fire-power). The so-called REAVERS are a worst-case example that comes to mind. I am afraid that these 'X-Men' may be just that, and are using this masquerade to cloak their true intent."

What does the death of the X-Men mean for our universe? *C.S. Claremont*, a commentator for the last fifteen years on mutant affairs, made this uncharacteristically emotional reply: "What the X-Men did was noble and necessary. If there was any justice in the world, they'd come back for a second chance."

But if there is one thing we have learned from the Adversary, it is that our universe is not just. —**Max Fleisher** / New York

island nation of Genosha faces sanctions for exercising the harshest control over its mutant population. Outlawed Genoshan magistrates (a paramilitary cadre detailed to the arrest and capture of mutants) fought a pitched battle in downtown Sydney with local law enforcement units. Insiders with the police say they were aided by the X-Men, who left a graffiti-tag of their logo behind. But were they really there?

"I don't believe so," ventured Yolen. "Especially in this case, which is so clearly linked to the Mutant Movement, which the X-Men championed.

I think what we're seeing here is 'X-Men' being adopted as the personification of this movement, just as the character of Robin Hood stands as a champion of the poor fighting against the oppression of the rich. Why, there are X-Men tags all over Brooklyn!"

To prove her point, Yolen mentions the X-Men sighting at Hollywood Mall. "A young girl was causing a disturbance, setting off fireworks inside the mall. Mall security guards chased her, afraid of the danger her fireworks posed. She 'disappeared into thin air.' Now there's talk the girl was a mutant, and also that four young women were seen



High noon at midnight: Downtown Dallas experienced this violation of the laws of nature on the day the X-Men died.

GREEN TURNS TO GRAY

Hulk Still Alive



Despite testimony at congressional hearings last year, and apparently incontrovertible proof to the contrary, the "Incredible Hulk" is still alive, we here at MYIR have learned exclusively.

Confidential government sources claim that the gamma spawned Hulk, who was believed to have died last year in the explosion that destroyed Mid-dietown, New Mexico, somehow survived the blast.

It had been believed that not even the Hulk could withstand being at ground zero of a Gamma Bomb detonation, the weapon that devastated the now infamous "Gammatown." Sources have no explanation, one

claiming, "There must be some small thing we overlooked."

The government is investigating the Hulk's activities during the time of his supposed demise. At this point, reports contradict. One report claims that an attack by the Hulk was the real cause of the oil spill incident in Valdez, Alaska. Another report states, more improbably, that the Hulk has been keeping a low profile as an enforcer for a casino owner in Las Vegas.

Sources claim the government has been investigating Michael Berengetti, whose casino, THE COLISEUM, has reportedly had several major structural mishaps in the past year. When con-

tacted by this publication, Berengetti stated, "The Hulk is green and stupid, right? Not exactly top level employment material, is he?"

Others claim that the Hulk has physically and mentally changed. Though spokesmen refuse to comment, increasing reports are that the Hulk was last known to be gray, and have a more accelerated intellect, making him more dangerous in the opinion of some. He reportedly transforms only at night, rather than in times of stress or anger.

Other secret government documents place the Hulk at such sites as Los Angeles, a radiation testing center in Yucca Flats, and a science convocation in Phoenix.

When asked for comment, President Bush said at a recent press conference, "Right, and Elvis is at the 7-11 in Detroit along with Bigfoot. Give me a break. Read my lips. He's dead. okay?"

Ironically, the instrument of the Hulk's believed demise was the same weapon that created the Hulk years ago. Dr. Robert Bruce Banner, the bomb's creator was exposed to Gamma rays during a test explosion. The radiation transformed Banner into the Hulk, and the green skinned monster led a checkered career since then. His activities ranged from being a founding member of the AVENGERS to devastating assaults on many "heroes" such as the Thing of the FANTASTIC FOUR.

Banner's wife, Elizabeth, and longtime associate, Rick Jones were unavailable for comment.

—J. David Guntley/Yucca Flats



Exclusive Interview With *The Wizard*

A candid conversation with the criminal who helped mastermind the Acts of Vengeance, a plot which threatened the lives of every super hero last fall.

Perhaps he's not one of the most threatening-looking super-criminals you'll ever have the misfortune of running across, but don't judge the Wizard by his appearance. In fact, the Wizard believes that the less dangerous he looks, the more danger he'll pose.

The Wizard began his criminal career in direct response to the advent of superhuman adventurers. Previously, he had been one of the most prominent celebrities of his day, known for his advanced scientific theories, his mastery of chess, and his "magic" escape routines. Because of his intellectual achievements, he became known in the media as the "Wizard," a name which he now prefers over his given name.

The Wizard was recently captured by the Avengers during the culmination of the Acts of Vengeance. He was incarcerated in the Vault, the maximum security prison for super-powered criminals located in the Colorado Rockies. Although the Wizard has no inherent super powers, federal authorities had limited success holding him for any length of time in conventional penitentiaries. Indeed, the

Wizard escaped from the Vault shortly before the Acts of Vengeance began.

As the official chronicler for all activities involving superhumans, we were granted an exclusive interview with the imprisoned Wizard. To conduct the interview, we sent staff writer Glenn Herdling to the Vault. There he was thoroughly searched before meeting the criminal mastermind. Guardsman Prime Frank Ensign watched over them like a hawk throughout the conference.

MARVEL YEAR IN REVIEW: You escaped from this prison once before. Do you think you can do it again?

WIZARD: They have yet to build the prison that can hold me for any length of time. This time it may take a little longer, but you'll soon see...

MYIR: Isn't it true that someone helped you the last time?

WIZARD: It wasn't help I'd solicited, or needed. I wasn't in the cell five minutes when this fellow appeared out of nowhere and offered to release me in exchange for a favor. I chose to play along, and the next thing I knew, I was clothed in my Wizard garb,

complete with all my weapons!

MYIR: What was the favor he asked?

WIZARD: He asked that I join (I believe the colloquial term is "team up with") a select group of superhumans in an effort to eliminate all of Earth's self-proclaimed super heroes.

MYIR: Who were these superhumans?

WIZARD: Latveria's deposed monarch Victor Von Doom, a man who proclaimed himself the Nazi Leader Red Skull, the mutant terrorist Magneto, and that Genghis Khan reject, Mandarin. Anyway, I, along with my colleagues, devised a simple method to destroy our long-time enemies. We sent other super-powered antagonists against these "heroes" who had never encountered them before. Since they did not already know how to defeat them, we assumed they'd be overwhelmed. The fellow who broke me out of this cage focused his attention on the AVENGERS. We later learned why when we discovered his identity—which I suspected all along, of course. The others just assumed he was some run-of-the-mill mutant with the power to warp dimensional



matrices—a feat which I mastered long ago—and that he had a vendetta against the Avengers. So this same man set up an extradimensional headquarters which we could all reach via portals from our various bases of operations. And that's where we manipulated our "Acts of Vengeance."

MYIR: What was your first objective in this scheme?

WIZARD: While many of the Avengers were away battling prisoners I had released from the Vault, we set upon the task of destroying Hydrobase. Doom's robots accomplished that deed within mere moments; the Avengers' former headquarters is now nothing but trash at the bottom of New York Harbor.

MYIR: Did any of the Core members have personal objectives?

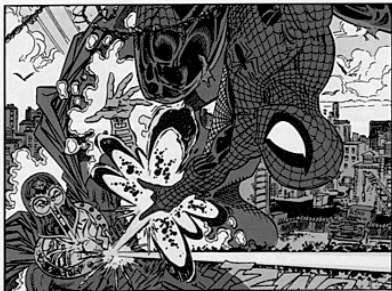
WIZARD: Let me just clarify something here. Although it was a pleasure associating with gentlemen whose intellectual capacities almost equal my own, we were never what you might call a "team." The "Core" nomenclature was granted to us by your esteemed colleagues in the press. It's not as if we at all resembled the *Masters of Evil*. As it turned out, we were *all* in this scheme for personal gain, and none of us was foolish enough to trust the others. Magneto, for instance, used the plan to lure his daughter, the *Scarlet Witch*, away from the WEST COAST AVENGERS and into his service once again. Doom was trying to discover a way to tap into the mysterious power that *Spider-Man* had acquired—a wild card which none of us could have foreseen. The Mandarin played a more direct role by transforming a mutant telepath into a pawn in his schemes for power.

MYIR: Did you physically participate in any of these Acts of Vengeance yourself?

WIZARD: At one point, yes. After we lured the *Blob*, *Pyro*, and *Avalanche* (all members of the government-sponsored FREEDOM FORCE) into attacking the Avengers, the Mandarin and I confronted the group ourselves. I sacrificed myself for my partner by allowing them to capture me during that encounter. I was subsequently imprisoned, but I summoned a dimensional matrix of my own to grant me freedom. After the Acts of Vengeance were officially over, I attempted to escape these wretched walls with the help of *Klaw*, the master of sound. But



Various "Acts of Vengeance" were performed throughout the country.



Spider-Man repels the attacking Magneto, utilizing his new "cosmic" powers.

that armor-clad idiot, *Iron Man*, performed an Act of Vengeance of his own and stopped us.

MYIR: Were the Acts of Vengeance intended to be contained solely within the United States?

WIZARD: Yes, at first. But the idea was so appealing that it spread like wildfire. We received reports of unfamiliar foes staging contests with which we had nothing to do. On the island of Madripoor, for instance, *Tiger Shark* was witnessed attacking two super-powered opponents with whom he is not usually associated. In exchange, the twins from Madripoor called *Fenris* attacked *Cloak* and *Dagger* in New York. The INHUMANS came all the way from their home on the moon and helped *Daredevil* defeat the thirteenth incarnation of *Ultron*, a robot composed of indestructible adamantium. Oh, we also dispatched the *Scorpion*, *Nekra*, and the *Asp* to deal with *ALPHA FLIGHT* in Canada. I never did hear how that turned out.

MYIR: How did your fellow conspirators get along?

WIZARD: (laughing) Talk about poor draft choices! Our benefactor put a Nazi war criminal and a Jew whose family was killed in a concentration camp on the same team. You can imagine the sparks that flew when that one came to a head! As for the rest of us, well, my teammates were always trying to outdo one another. If they had used a little more teamwork,

like I had in my old days with the FRIGHTFUL FOUR, this plan might have succeeded better than it did. Of course, conflicts erupted among the other players in our little game as well, with so many of them stepping on each other's toes and invading each other's territories. The *Shocker*, the *Rhino*, and *Hydro-Man* staged a free-for-all in the middle of Times Square while the *Cobra*, the SERPENT SOCIETY's current leader, tried to prove himself in battle against his former partner, *Mister Hyde*.

MYIR: So, this super-criminal team-up was a flop because the participants didn't cooperate with each other?

WIZARD: I would not call it a flop. Of course, none of the heroes were permanently defeated, but it certainly was fun watching them all trying to determine just what was going on. And just as there were rifts among our factions, the super-goodies also had some spectacular quarrels in their ranks. *Captain America* had to subdue his longtime ally, the *Sub-Mariner*, whom we had brainwashed. The cosmic *Quasar* fought the cosmic *Spider-Man*, and the results were, well, cosmic! And speaking of cosmic, I understand *Spider-Man* actually punched the *Hulk* into orbit!

MYIR: In your opinion, then, the plan wasn't a failure?

WIZARD: Not at all. We cleverly coincided the Acts of Vengeance with the government hearings for the Super

Powers Registration Act. With all the property damage the Acts were causing, the super heroes were certain to receive a lot of bad press nationwide. In fact, we tried to restrain the FANTASTIC FOUR from testifying during those hearings by sending a barrage of second-rate superhumans against them, but they seemed to handle them with apparent ease. Not surprising since they've dealt with me on innumerable occasions in the past, and I'm no second-rater. Unfortunately, Congress didn't pass the Super Powers Registration Act. That would have made the whole operation worthwhile.

MYIR: You still haven't mentioned the identity of the real perpetrator behind these Acts.

WIZARD: I guess it's no secret anymore. It was the same man who broke me out of the Vault, none other than *Loki*, *Thor*'s brother, or half brother, rather. It's no wonder that a so-called god needed me to head up his entire scheme. It seems that *Loki* was the initial force behind the formation of the Avengers, and he has been ruling that day ever since. Each of my colleagues thought he was some subversive fool, when he was actually manipulating them all right from the start. I, however, had surmised his true identity. What a laugh he must have had. God of mischief, indeed! He received his just deserts, though, when the Avengers followed me from my prison cell to the Core headquarters through one of his dimensional matrices. That was where we met our ultimate defeat, and *Loki* received his brother's swift hand of justice.

MYIR: You almost sound relieved.

WIZARD: As I told you right from the beginning, I hate super heroes with a passion, no matter which side of the law they're on. Gods are included in that lot. They diminish the achievements of normal human beings. I used to be a popular celebrity until the advent of the "super hero." No one really cares about inventors or chessmasters anymore. They want to see a man whose body alights in flame.

MYIR: You see yourself as a missionary for the common man?

WIZARD: Well, of course. That's why I wanted to do this interview—to spread my word, so to speak. If you can get my message across, I'll grant you another interview as soon as I break out of this cage. By my calculations, that should be within about three weeks.

—Glenn Herdling/
New York

SUPERHUMAN FARE WITH A FLAIR!

Our creative critic was on the lookout this month for recipes that not only *taste* good, but are recommended to us by some *super-lative* gastronomes. But beware; these recipes are intended for *superhuman* palates, and not for mere mortals!

MEPHISTO'S DEVIL'S FOOD CAKE

2 C flour	¼ C red dye #2
1 ½ C sugar	½ C shortening
1 C milk	1 ½ tsp baking soda
¼ C cream	1 tsp salt
½ tsp baking powder	1 tsp vanilla
3 squares unsweetened chocolate, melted	3 eggs
	1 touch of evil

1. Preheat flaming pit to 350 F. Grease and flour two 9" round cake pans.
2. In mixing bowl, combine all ingredients. Brutally beat by hand 350 strokes. Pour into pans and bake 25-30 mins. or until cake springs up to the touch.
3. Garnish with red hots, cinnamon candies, cherries, strawberries, hot red peppers, raspberries, burning embers, the souls of the evil departed. . . .



SUB-MARINER'S KELP SOUFFLE

2 C Kelp	2 tbs butter
3 eggs	2 tsp flour
½ C milk	2 tbsps saltwater

1. Preheat oven to 325 F. Separate 3 eggs. Combine and heat butter, flour, salt, milk, kelp, and 3 egg yolks.
2. In large bowl, beat 3 egg whites until stiff. Fold into kelp mix.
3. Pour into casserole. Bake, above sea level, 20-25 mins. Serve immediately.



GHOST RIDER'S CREPE SUZETTES

2 dozen crepes	½ tsp grated orange peel
½ C orange juice	¼ C orange liqueur
4 tbs sugar	

1. Prepare crepes.
2. In chafing dish, blend all ingredients but liqueur over low heat.
3. Fold crepes into quarters; arrange in sauce; heat through.
4. In small saucepan, heat liqueur until hot. Remove from heat. Ignite, and pour flaming liquer over crepes. Serve immediately.



Fashion

The 1989 Best Dressed List

by Janet Van Dyne



1 The Incredible Hulk

Wonder of Wonders! The Hulk was discovered still alive this year—and well dressed! That famous "Fixit" fellow seen in Las Vegas's smarter nightspots, sporting fedora, gloves, cane and 3 piece suit, turned out to be the Hulk himself. I predict this natty look—a first for the Hulk—starts a trend in super hero attire.



2 Doctor Strange

Those handsome graying temples—that dashing, always mysterious eyepatch. (Really, what lady doesn't consider it sexy?) Stephen Strange showed up in some fine Italian suits this year, cutting quite the dashing figure. Need I say more?



3 Brian Braddock

When you've got a gorgeous frame like Brian Braddock, anything you wear looks great! Of course, an impressively cut British suit and overcoat doesn't hurt.

4 Courtney Ross

The epitome of elegance. Gorgeous outfit, hair perfectly coiffed and colored (If Tigra were here she'd be saying "meow" to that last remark.), and her taste in men—the best.



5 Tony Stark

Always a topnotch dresser. I tip my wings to Tony. He's had an incredibly rough year, and he's come out of it with grace and style. Tony, nice to see you up and about!



6 The Invisible Woman

Sue Richards gave up the cosmopolitan life this past year for the "burbs," but not without flair. I found her new country casuals to be just darling, and still with just a hint of chic.



7 She-Hulk

Jen's looks are so varied these days, I find it hard to choose among them. But I opted for the professional woman's look. Very 90's! Very vague. (Although I still won't say that look's my favorite!)

8 Spider-Man

Look out fashion world, Spider-Man's stealing the limelight this year! A definite fashion risk, Spidey, and I, for one, say, Bravo!

9 Boom Boom

Honey, I am so glad you gave up on the Madonna look this year! Boom Boom epitomizes the hip, trendy teen. I expect to see quite a few BB look-alikes out there in '90.

10 Valentina Allegra de Fontaine

Haven't seen a lot of her out of working clothes this year, but the coiffure is timeless. And I predict that classical look will be in, in, in for 1990!

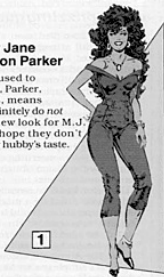


The 1989 Worst Dressed List

by Janet Van Dyne

1 Mary Jane Watson Parker

If Watson used to mean class, Parker, these days, means tacky. I definitely do not like this new look for M.J. Let's just hope they don't mirror new hubby's taste.



2 Captain Ultra

I don't really like to put down super hero costumes, because we all know that function is so much more important than style. But this year, Captain U... I just have to speak my mind. Give up a few colors!



3 Mad Cap

And the same goes for this wacko. Elaborating would be pointless. Just feast your eyes, folks.



4 Hank Pym

A truly admirable man (and I should know), so I know I won't hurt his feelings when I say it. That red jumpsuit (one for each day of the week) was boring me stiff! I'm proud to say that Hank's promised to work on this fatal flaw.

5 Scarlet Witch

Fortunately, I've told her this before, and she doesn't mind. Wanda's a lovely girl—and I'd die for hair like that. Maybe I'm just saying, show it off more. Lose that headdress!

6 The Incredible Hulk

And now for the crossovers! Hulk had the best—and the worst—this year. I'm sorry to say he's gone back to the look of old. For shame!



7 She-Hulk

Another crossover for this year (not to be confused with crossdresser). Jennifer's certainly not afraid to take risks. Some just work out better than others. Sorry, Jen.

8 James Rhodes

Too bad he doesn't emulate his friend, Tony Stark's, tastes. Disco is out Rhodey!

9 Mario Chandler

Really, I thought gangsters' molls were passe! Once I found out who Fikit really was, I did some homework, and came up with this chick. A lovely girl with an unfortunate taste in men, but put some clothes on!

10 Kathy Dare

Forget Fatal Attractions (I'm speaking of course of hers for T. Stark). How could he have been attracted to this? Do people use the word "hussy" anymore?



A case of "Double Vision"

From beyond the grave comes the newest Avenger—and a puzzling question receives an even more puzzling answer.



Shadows of the past—the Vision then, and now.

In a startling turn of events, the world has gained both a new answer to an old mystery, and a brand-new, yet decades-old, super-powered crime-fighter. Confused? Then imagine how the West Coast division of the Avengers felt when the original *Human Torch* burst from his grave and shook hands with the android *Vision*, who was thought to have been the Torch himself in a former incarnation!

The tangled threads of this story of mistaken identity stretch all the way back to World War II, when the original Torch was active as a crimefighter and super hero (see box for details). After the war, the Torch fought domestic crime and suspected Communist agents for a number of years, and then dropped out of sight. He reappeared years later, according to the *FANTASTIC FOUR*, who reported that the Torch had been manipulated into battling them by an enemy of theirs, the criminal *Mad Thinker*. During the battle, the Torch was "killed" by his captor (because the Torch is actually

an android, "deactivated" would be a more fitting term). The *Fantastic Four* left the nonfunctional android in the Thinker's underground base, meaning to return later for a more detailed investigation.

The *Mad Thinker*, however, soon returned to the base and used the Torch's body in a scheme to entrap the Torch's former partner, *Toro*, and use his flaming powers to defeat the *Sub-Mariner*. During this scheme, the Thinker staged a fake funeral for the Torch, and, although it was not discovered until recent months, he buried the Torch's body in an abandoned cemetery in Pleasantville, New York. And that's where the body would have stayed, if not for the efforts of *Ann Raymond*, the wife of *Toro*.

The *Mad Thinker* had brainwashed *Toro* into believing that he was the original *Human Torch*, and *Toro* had identified himself as such when he attacked the *Sub-Mariner*. Eventually, the *Sub-Mariner* discovered the truth, and freed *Toro* from the *Mad Thinker's*

influence. *Toro* died soon after in an unsuccessful attempt to capture the *Mad Thinker*. The *Sub-Mariner* visited *Ann Raymond* soon after and brought her the news of *Toro's* death. The grief-stricken Mrs. *Raymond* accepted the fact of her husband's death, until recently. Earlier this summer, she appeared at the Avengers' West Coast compound, driven to the point of near-madness by a report she had heard in the news media concerning one of their members, the *Vision* (for the *Vision's* background, see box).

The *Vision* had been recently captured and disassembled by a multinational security operation. To aid in his subsequent reassembly, the Avengers located the aged *Professor Horton* (see box), who had originally built the Torch. The Avengers reasoned that it would be a simple matter for *Horton* to rebuild the *Vision*, since the *Vision* was thought to be a reworked version of the original *Human Torch*. However, *Horton* was unable to help in any capacity, for he claimed that while the components of the *Vision* looked familiar, the construction of the *Vision* was totally unlike that of the Torch. Thus, he concluded that the *Vision* had never been the *Human Torch*. The *Vision* was later reassembled by *Henry Pym*, the Avengers' resident scientist.

Horton's claim, widely reported to the media, was what drove *Ann Raymond* to seek out the Avengers. Her grief over her husband's death had led her to connect several of the new discoveries concerning the *Vision* with some old hopes and, in the end, she concluded that her husband, *Toro*, could still be alive. Her conclusion was a flimsy one at best, for *Toro* had gone missing after the *Sub-Mariner* reported his death (*Toro* caused his own death by flying into the *Mad Thinker's* aircraft's engine, and propelling the aircraft into an erupting volcano, where the aircraft exploded. Not surprisingly, his body was never found). She felt, however, that the *Sub-Mariner* may have been mistaken, and that he had actually fought the *Human Torch*, as he had originally believed, and not *Toro*, as he later discovered. Although the Avengers quickly discounted her theory, they were intrigued by Mrs. *Raymond's* story of the Torch's funeral from which *Toro* had telephoned his wife, shortly before his death. Additionally, they were now curious about the *Vision's* true origin, since *Horton's* assertion made

it seem that the original story about the Vision being a reworked Human Torch was incorrect. They decided to investigate, starting with the abandoned cemetery in which the Torch's "funeral" had been held. It was unlikely that the Avengers would have received permission to exhume the Torch's alleged grave, considering that the town in which the cemetery was located had no records of the Mad Thinker's staged funeral. They still visited the gravesite, however, hoping to find some clues to the mystery. The Vision reasoned that using his power to turn intangible and entering the coffin for a quick look would not constitute "disturbing" the grave, and without waiting for clearance, did so. He discovered that the original Human Torch was indeed buried in the coffin, and, due to the nature of the Torch's android body, it had not decomposed in any way. While the majority of the Avengers debated their next course of action, the *Scarlet Witch* trained her mutant ability to alter probabilities on the Torch's grave. Seconds later, according to the Avengers, the Human Torch regained consciousness, burst into flame, and emerged from the grave under his own power. Witnesses relate the story in a more dramatic fashion, reporting that they saw *Wonder Man* chasing an erratically flying, flaming figure across the afternoon skies.

The Torch accompanied the West Coast Avengers back to their compound, and has operated as one of their members ever since. He participated in several battles during this past year's Atlantean attack. One can assume that the addition of his heat and flame powers to our defense forces was not welcomed by our amphibious enemies.

As for the mystery of the Vision's origins, Henry Pym believes he has the answer. Since the Vision was indeed created using the same processes and components as the Human Torch, Pym deduced that Ultron-5 found Horton's equipment in the warehouse it was stored in, and used the equipment to build the Vision from the Torch's "spare parts." Unfortunately, Ultron could not be reached by our MYIR reporter to confirm or deny Pym's theory.

While one mystery has been solved, another one has come into being: specifically, why would the being that the Avengers refer to as "Immortus" weave such an elaborate deception regarding the Vision? "Either it's part of some devious, galaxy-spanning, nefarious plot," muses Henry Pym, "or maybe Immortus is just a big fat liar."

— Marc Siry/

Los Angeles



No, they're not the same, as this photo proves.

A Tale Of Two Androids

The World War II years were both the best and worst of times for an inventor by the name of *Phineas T. Horton*. He had made a tremendous advance in the field of robotics by developing a system for creating stunningly life-like mechanical replicas of human beings, more commonly referred to as "androids." However, the prototype model that Horton built possessed a major flaw—the solar powered cells that covered the android's body were highly unstable, and burst into flame upon contact with oxygen. As a safety measure, Horton buried the android in cement, but it soon gained consciousness, ignited spontaneously, and burst free. The android possessed flame-manipulation powers identical to today's *Human Torch*, and was, in fact, the namesake for the FANTASTIC FOUR's fiery member. The original Torch soon mastered his powers, developed a remarkable degree of sentience, and became first a New York City policeman, and then a member of the anti-Axis force known as the INVADERS. While the Torch proved his value time and again as a force for good, the United States Government never trusted the concept of artificial humans, and refused to fund the construction of additional androids. Horton, stunned and baffled by his government's rejection of his project, stored the equipment used to create the Torch in an abandoned warehouse in Manhattan.

The Vision's first appearance was in the form of a foe of the Avengers. He had been dispatched by another enemy of the Avengers, *Ultron-5*. However, the Vision soon turned against his master, and helped to defeat Ultron. After proving his good intentions, the Vision became a member of the Avengers.

Some years later, the Avengers released an "origin" of the Vision, one that had been provided to them by a shadowy figure known as *Immortus*, who is reputed to be able to view any time period he wishes (thus explaining how he knew the details of the Vision's creation). In the version of the story originally released by the Avengers, Ultron-5 was said to have found the original Human Torch's body in the Mad Thinker's desert lab, after the Torch's "fatal" battle with the Mad Thinker. Ultron then supposedly rebuilt the android, transforming the Torch into the Vision. This version of the Vision's origin was accepted as fact until recently, when the Vision's abduction and dismantling spurred new inquiries into the old mysteries.

LET THE
GAMES
BEGIN

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Superheroics On The Silver Screen



Above: Bixby Banner

Inset: The Hulk

It seems that few super heroes can escape the media's attention. Every year, new movies are springing up which star or are about super heroes. During the year 1989, the *She-Hulk* (our woman of the year), her cousin the *Incredible Hulk*, *Daredevil*, and the *Punisher* all were portrayed in major motion pictures. All but one of these films were completely unauthorized, and the other, *"She-Hulk: the Movie"*, was created under some very strange circumstances.

One wonders how Dr. Bruce Banner (the Hulk) or *Daredevil* feels when he sees his life fictionalized for television. Both men were the subject of the latest super hero television special, *"The Trial of the Incredible Hulk."* In this movie, *Daredevil* teams up with Banner because the Doctor was accused of a murder he didn't commit. It seems that Banner is on the subway in New York City (where else!) while two thugs are accosting a woman, and as he intervenes, he turns into that pesky Hulk and defeats the thugs. But, while the battle is raging, a shot fires from one of the thug's guns and severely injures the woman. The thugs (who work for a villain known as the *"Kingpin"*) escape the scene of the crime, and Banner is left in the arms of the police. Eventually, *Daredevil* frees the Hulk, fights the Kingpin, and clears Banner's name. This conclusion leaves everyone happy, except maybe for the viewer, who's probably wondering what's going on for much of this program. One can just imagine *Daredevil*, sitting at home watching

himself in the wrong costume, and laughing under his mask.

This isn't to say that the program wasn't enjoyable, though. During the movie, there were quite a few very good action sequences, and the acting by Bill Bixby and Rex Smith was quite impressive. Judging from the show's ratings, many people agree that the *"Incredible Hulk"* programs are worth watching. It just seems that they would be much more enjoyable if there was a little less fiction and a lot more reality.

Reality doesn't seem to be the problem in *"The Punisher."* During these days of frequent vigilante killings, this movie seems all too real. In this apparently biographical portrayal of *Frank Castle's* life, the viewer is taken on an exciting journey into the life of a former marine who sees his family killed during a gang battle. This is a non-stop action thriller, with *Dolph Lundgren* as a very believable *Punisher*. Since the producers of this movie are still alive, one can only assume that this is the actual story of the *Punisher's* origin, and not a fabrication like *Daredevil's* seems to be.

In reviewing the films of 1989, one can't omit *"She-Hulk: the Movie."* This "bio-pic," featuring *P. Isadora* as *Jennifer Walters*, has to be one of the worst movies of the year, and possibly the decade. They must have given *She-*

Hulk a lot of money to endorse this film, which includes a number of poor musical pieces, some of the most pitiful actors to ever (dis)grace the screen, and one of the worst scripts ever written. This hasn't deterred the public from coming out in droves to see this movie, though. At week's end, *"She-Hulk: the Movie"* was the number one box office draw for the thirteenth week in a row, with no signs of letting up. Apparently the film's success came as a big surprise to the producer, who insiders say expected the film to do extremely poorly at the box office. He allegedly planned to make money on the film's failure, and upon its success fled the country. This occurrence, along with *She-Hulk's* seemingly mercenary attitude, makes *"She-Hulk: the Movie"* one of the stranger films to come out this year.

With 1989 now over, the movie goer also has some noteworthy films to look forward to during 1990. This year, *Wonder Man* is due to star in another motion picture, another *Hulk* television movie is slated for release, and a film on the enigmatic *Vision* is expected. You can rest assured that a lot more super hero films will probably be out by year's end. That just seems to be the nature of the industry these days. At this rate, *Shamrock*, the super heroine of Ireland, will probably get a feature film within a few years. Let's just hope she doesn't want a musical!

—David Wohl



Scene from "The Punisher"

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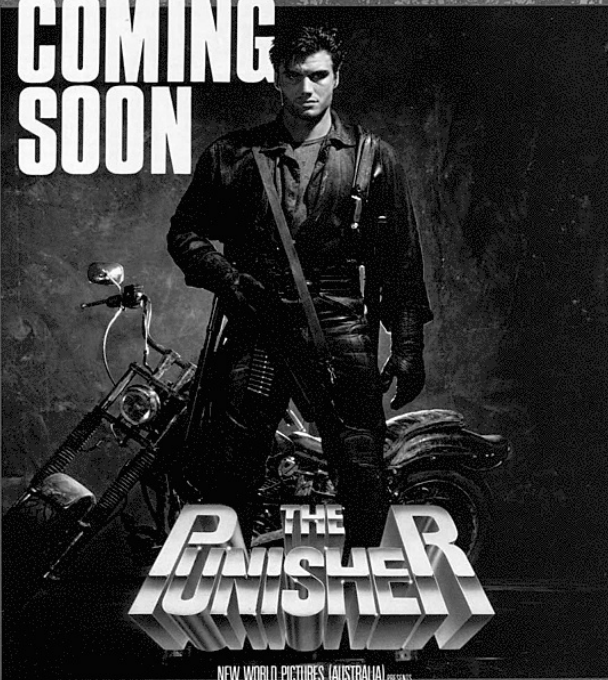
Our employees are literally working overtime so that, despite the millions of tons of oil lost in the water, America's fuel needs will be met. Sure, all of this overtime means that we're going to have to charge a little more for petroleum products, but isn't that a small price to pay for energy security?

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